THE Nation.

PRIMARIES GONE WILD!

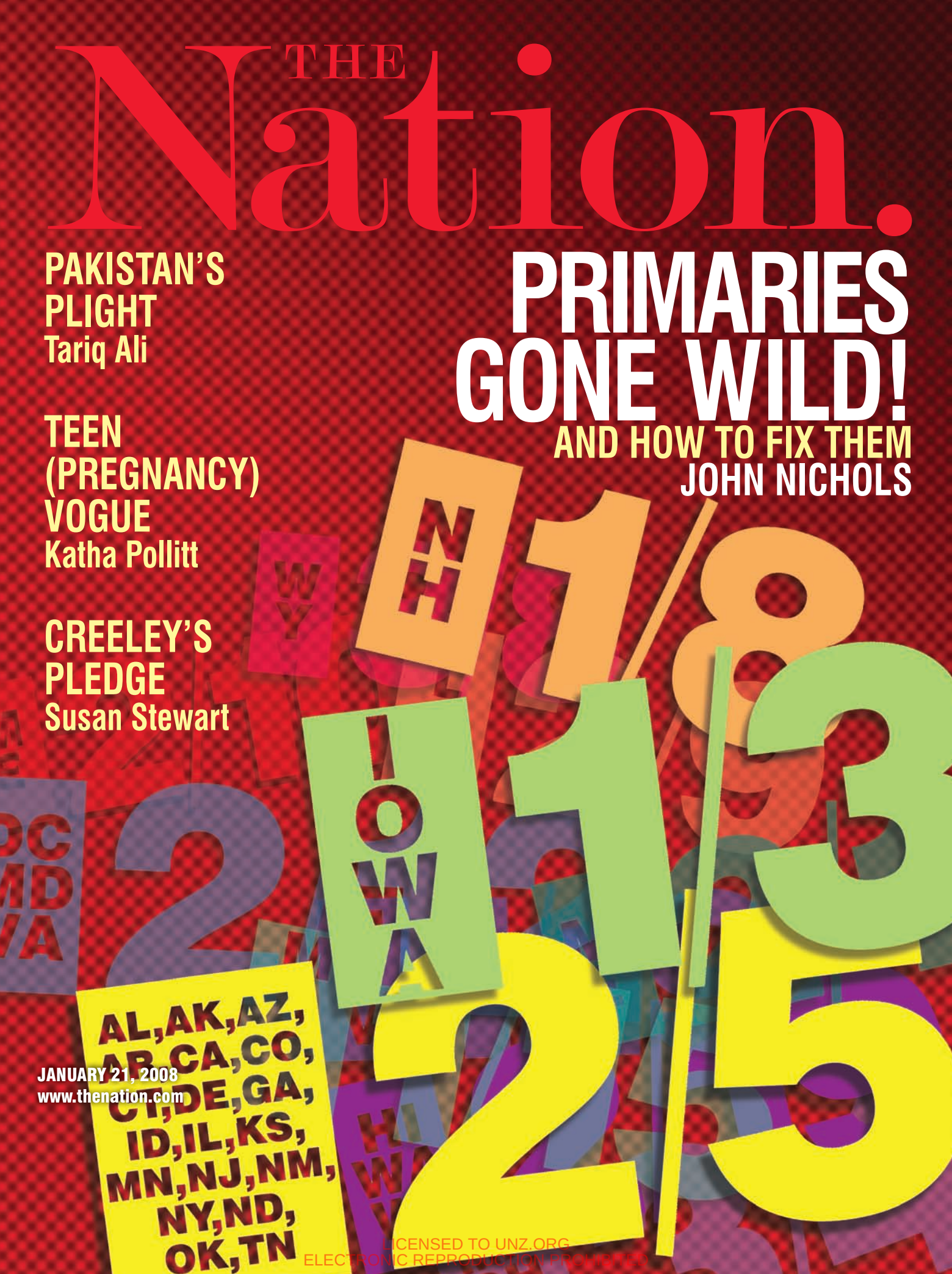
AND HOW TO FIX THEM

JOHN NICHOLS

PAKISTAN'S PLIGHT
Tariq Ali

TEEN (PREGNANCY) VOGUE
Katha Pollitt

CREELEY'S PLEDGE
Susan Stewart



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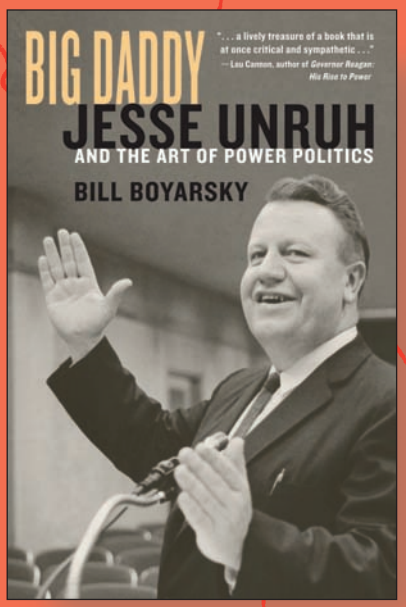
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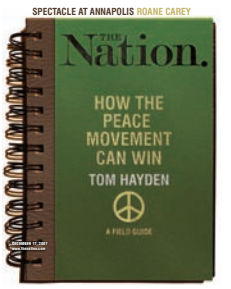

Israel's 'Sacrifice' Doesn't Cut It

New York City

Re "Spectacle at Annapolis" [Dec. 17]: Roane Carey makes a two-state solution sound possible if both sides make large sacrifices—Israel would have to remove several hundred thousand settlers from the West Bank, and the Palestinians would have to give up the right of return. In a situation like this, we cannot speak of justice—not for the thousands killed, the lives stunted by loss of education, health and income—but we must think of some kind of resemblance to justice, and the two-state solution without recognition of refugee rights does not cut it. The PLO—the only recognized representative of the Palestinian people—might cede the right of return, but it is an individual right and cannot legitimately be given away.

One can speak, as Carey does, of a parallel sacrifice by Israel of returning to the 1967 borders; but the land was stolen and returning it is no more a sacrifice than a thief makes a sacrifice when returning stolen jewels.

A two-state solution may no longer be possible, but for those who believe in it, a simple preliminary—a census of how many Palestinians would actually return and how many would accept compensation—has never even been officially proposed.

Miriam Reik

Blow It Out Your Prius—or Not

Fresno, Calif.

Kudos to Alexander Cockburn ["Beat the Devil," Dec. 17] for his exposé on the sham of recycling. It's time the enviro-left faced up to the fact that the Prius we drive will never recoup any "energy savings" that the car's pollution in production causes. Or the sham of fluorescent bulbs with their vastly less "recyclable" thirty-plus parts (including mercury) compared with a humble incandescent's roughly seven (and easily "recyclable"), and on to the string bags we righteously take to the co-op then fill full of plastic bags bulging with organic produce (from Mexico and beyond), or the endless packaging we haul home touting "natural" ingredients and health benefits then toss into the "recycling" bin mindlessly. The list goes on and on.

Nowhere in the environmental movement is there a coherent voice addressing the stark realization that none of these amenities of Western "civilization" (including our Starbucks latte, the morning newspaper, our iPods, MacBook Pros, stereos, tap-water filters made of plastic from Mississippi and so on, ad nauseam) are sustainable. Not a one. Yet only with that unpopular but critical realization will we finally come to a more intelligent dialogue about the likely fate of our battered, dying yet wonderful Earth, as the (bourgeois) well-meaning lefty environmentalists we claim to be.

Peter McDonald

Atlanta

Perhaps Alexander Cockburn is unaware of the following: recycling creates six times as many jobs as landfilling. Recycling glass instead of making it from silica sand reduces mining waste by 70 percent, water use by 50 percent and air pollution by 20 percent. Every ton of recycled office paper saves 380 gallons of oil. Energy saved from one recycled aluminum can will operate a television for three hours. If every US household replaced just one roll of 1,000-sheet virgin-fiber bathroom tissue with a 100 percent recycled one, we could save 373,000 trees, 1.5 million cubic feet of landfill space and 155 million gallons of water. These are just a few reasons to recycle, among many, many others. We need not choose between human liberation and sustainable living. We cannot have one without the other.

Sharon Forrest

Peace Movement Problems

Philadelphia

The problem I found with Tom Hayden's "How the Peace Movement Can Win"

(continued on page 24)

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Pakistan's Plight

A multidimensional charade is taking place in Pakistan, and it is not an edifying sight. Pervez Musharraf has discarded his uniform and is trying to cling to power, whatever the cost.

COMMENT

So far it has been high: the dismissal of the Supreme Court judges and their replacement by stooges; police brutality against a strong lawyers' movement protesting the military assault on the judiciary; and the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, who had returned to Pakistan as part of an ill-judged deal brokered by the Bush Administration and its British acolytes.

Add to this the sad spectacle of supposedly reformist, Western-backed politicians assembling like old family retainers at the feudal home of the slain leader and rubber-stamping her political will: Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari, has become stopgap supremo till her 19-year-old son, Bilawal, can replace his late mother as chairperson-for-life. This farcical succession occurred in a party that was born in 1967 out of the mass struggle of disenfranchised students, workers, professionals and peasants for democracy and, yes, socialism. That is why it was named the Pakistan People's Party. Its trajectory encapsulates the crisis of democratic politics in Pakistan: a party is publicly expropriated and corrupted by a single faction from an old family; its members are treated like serfs; its weak-kneed leaders told to either accept their new overlords or find another vehicle for their ambitions. Where can they go?

The PPP's major rival, the Pakistan Muslim League, is hardly better. It is in the grip of the Sharif brothers. Patronized by the military and the state, they became very rich, which helped them to maintain their party and support. After Nawaz Sharif fell out with Musharraf and was toppled in the 1999 coup, he sought the protection of the Saudi royal family. Sporting Wahhabi headgear, he returned home in November with their support. It's bad enough having semipermanent military rule, but when the alternatives are deeply flawed booty politicians, what hope is there for this benighted land?

The roots of the problem go back to soon after the founding of the state, when the military-bureaucratic leaders decided at an early stage (1950) to become a US satrapy: the Dulles brothers saw to it that the new ally was locked into a network of cold war alliances. Henceforth, US global priorities determined Pakistan's foreign and domestic policies. Whenever there was the threat of a democratic victory by parties pledging to withdraw Pakistan from US security arrangements, Foggy Bottom would appeal directly to the Pakistani army. The coups d'état of 1958 and 1977 were greenlighted by Washington, with disastrous results. Then there was the trial and execution—privately approved by Washington—of democratically elected Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Benazir's father, by dictator Muhammad Zia ul-Haq; the creation of local state-backed jihadi groups to "liberate" Afghanistan from the Soviets; and the brutalization of the country's political culture with public floggings and hangings of criminals as well as activists.

The ultimate consequences of the anti-Soviet jihad were America's turning a blind eye as General Zia hurriedly nuclearized the country, the attacks of 9/11 and the NATO occupation of Afghanistan, with the ensuing instability on Pakistan's northwest frontier. The post–cold war embargo designed to punish Pakistan for its possession of nuclear weapons proved ineffective, and all family tiffs were happily forgotten as the "war on terror" commenced. The balance sheet is dismal.

The instability in the border provinces is a direct result of the NATO occupation and war in Afghanistan, which has created a crisis of conscience inside the army. There is much unhappiness at being paid

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NEWS & ANALYSIS

Barbara Crossette: Benazir Bhutto

Christian Parenti: What Next for Pakistan?

Rebecca Solnit: The Secret Library of Hope

Campaign '08: Complete coverage of Iowa and New Hampshire

TRUTH-O-METER

Tracking the candidates

NATION POLL

Who'll make the strongest showing in New Hampshire?

RADIO NATION

Jonathan Schell and Naomi Klein

to kill fellow Muslims in the tribal areas that border Afghanistan. The arrogant and humiliating behavior of NATO soldiers has hardly helped matters in either country, and sending US troops to train the Pakistani military in counterinsurgency can only further inflame passions. Long-term stability in Afghanistan requires a regional agreement involving India, Russia, Iran and Pakistan and the withdrawal of all NATO troops.

As for Musharraf, he has failed as an effective US point man in Pakistan. The elections, now delayed until February 18, are likely to be fixed and will thus lack legitimacy. The general's failure to protect Benazir Bhutto has not gone down well in Washington. When Hillary Clinton and Joseph Biden cast doubt on the government's explanation for her killing, it's a sure sign that he could be heading for the dustbin.

There is a Pakistani solution to the current impasse: Musharraf's replacement by a less contentious figure, an all-party government to prepare for free elections, removal of all curbs on the media and reinstatement of the sacked Supreme Court judges so they can investigate Benazir Bhutto's murder without fear or favor. With the slow death of the PPP, the country also needs a genuine, radical democratic party that can respond to the social needs of the underprivileged majority and the expanding demands of civil society.

For its part, Washington should accept a self-denying ordinance: it should stop treating the Pakistani army as contract killers on a turbulent Afghan frontier, and it should refrain from encouraging military rule. This was never a panacea for the country's ills, and never can be. And Washington should encourage regional unity to solve political problems without resorting to force. Were it to do so, pigs would fly. Pakistan's dark night is far from over.

TARIQ ALI

Tariq Ali is an editor at New Left Review. *His latest book*, The Duel: Pakistan on the Flight Path of American Power, *will be published by Scribner later this year, and his lengthy essay on the Bhuttos is available on the* London Review of Books *website.*

Toy Story

COMMENT

With Christmas behind us and Santa come and gone, parents may be wondering if all those new toys strewn around the house are safe. After all, it wasn't long before the holidays that we learned that millions of toys sold here were coated in lead paint that could cause brain damage, or hid magnets that, if swallowed, could cause potentially fatal intestinal damage. But those toys were recalled. So we can trust that the ones that ended up under the tree this Christmas are safe, right?

Not really. That's because the problem wasn't just with Mattel, which made the lead-coated Barbies and magnetic Polly Pocket dolls, or RC2, which made the toxic Thomas & Friends trains. And it wasn't just in China, where factory owners, under pressure from importers, used dangerous materials to cut costs. The third prong of the problem is in Washington, where the Consumer Product Safety Commission, for years a skeletal agency, has under George W. Bush been essentially beheaded—run by political operatives whose cause is not con-

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Noted.

GUEST STARRING… Starting in January, TheNation.com will host some of the most incisive, cutting-edge political bloggers in a new rotating guest blog, **Passing Through**, featuring frequent posts by experts on economics, the environment, youth culture, the Middle East and more. First up is **Jessica Valenti**, a 29-year-old writer from New York and founder of the nationally celebrated blog **Feministing**. Jessica writes regularly for the *Guardian* and *Salon* and is the author of *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Why Feminism Matters*, released last spring by Seal Press. She is also a co-founder of the **REAL Hot 100**, a campaign that highlights the important work that young women are doing across the country. Look for Jessica's posts starting January 3 and continuing until the end of the month—at which point she'll pass the baton to a soon-to-be announced fellow blogger.

KRISTOL BALL: The war in Iraq may have cost 3,900 US soldiers their lives, destroyed America's reputation abroad and turned **George W. Bush** into one of the most unpopular Presidents in history, but it has proved curiously beneficial to one group of people: the pundits who promoted it. Nobody has been rewarded more generously than **William Kristol**, editor of **The Weekly Standard**, neocon extraordinaire and, now, weekly columnist for the **New York Times**. Some might imagine that slavishly endorsing the lies of the Bush Administration might tarnish the credibility of a commentator on foreign affairs. But Kristol, who before this had been a columnist at **Time** magazine (which declined to renew his contract) and who is a regular fixture on the TV pundit circuit, is the latest proof to the contrary. What might have inspired the *Times* to sign him up? The paper's owners apparently felt that having one neoconservative op-ed columnist who supported the war, **David Brooks**, was not enough. And they apparently felt in a more forgiving mood than the man they chose to hire. In 2006 Kristol suggested that the Justice Department should prosecute the *Times* for reporting on a secret Bush Administration program to monitor international banking. In 2003 he dismissed the paper of record as "irredeemable," something his own reputation, clearly, is not. EYAL PRESS

HOOVER'S ROUNDUP: Twelve days after US troops were sent to fight in a faraway country, the FBI suggested to the President that thousands of people be rounded up and detained as "potentially dangerous" to national security. Almost all of them were citizens, and the FBI also proposed that the President suspend habeas corpus to make the roundup constitutional. The President, however, was not George W. Bush, and the war in question was not the "war on terror"—it was the Korean War.

The plan was outlined in a 1950 letter from FBI Director **J. Edgar Hoover** to an assistant to President **Harry Truman**. As first reported by Tim Weiner of the *New York Times*, Hoover's letter was included in the latest volume of the State Department series *Foreign Relations of the United States*, released December 22. Hoover told Truman that the FBI had spent "a long period of time" creating a list of "approximately twelve thousand individuals, of which approximately ninety-seven per cent are citizens of the United States." He called for "permanent detention" of these 12,000 people in order to "protect the country against treason, espionage and sabotage." (The names of targets were not included in the recently declassified material.)

What would such a roundup look like? Now we know: Hoover was concerned about making sure his plan would hold up in court. The way to do that, he wrote, was to get the President to issue a proclamation that "recites the existence of the emergency situation and that in order to immediately protect the country against treason, espionage and sabotage the Attorney General is instructed to apprehend all individuals potentially dangerous to the internal security." In order for that to be legal, the President's proclamation would suspend habeas corpus. Then Congress would pass a "joint resolution" supporting the roundup, and the President would issue an executive order to the FBI to go to work. Hoover's other concern was where to jail 12,000 people. So many of those on the list lived in New York City, Los Angeles and San Francisco that prisons there would not have been big enough to hold all of them; for the suspects in those cities, Hoover proposed "detention in Military facilities."

The 1950 plan has some striking parallels to **George W. Bush**'s policies today. After 9/11, as Weiner explained, Bush "issued an order that effectively allowed the United States to hold suspects indefinitely without a hearing, a lawyer, or formal charges." In 2006 Congress passed a law formally suspending habeas corpus for anyone named by the President as an "unlawful enemy combatant." The Supreme Court is reviewing that law this term.

There are significant differences, however, between the 1950 plan and our present "war on terror." Hoover's plan required "a statement of charges to be served on each detainee and a hearing to be afforded the individual within a specified period." And President Truman ignored the FBI proposal; he never went to the Supreme Court to argue that habeas corpus did not apply to people detained as threats to the country. JON WIENER

FOREIGN LANGUAGES: How out of touch is the Republican Party with the rest of the world? One of its leading presidential candidates, **Mike Huckabee**, so badly fumbled questions in the aftermath of **Benazir Bhutto**'s assassination that reporters subjected him to days of pop geography quizzes. Huckabee wrongly asserted that the assassination could impact continued martial law in Pakistan (it had already been lifted); that Afghanistan lies to the east of Pakistan (that would be India) and that there are "more Pakistani illegals coming across our border than all other nationalities except those immediately south of the border" (try the Philippines, Korea, China and Vietnam first). Huckabee also said that unrest in Pakistan is reason to build a fence along the US-Mexico border. Meanwhile, the GOP presidential candidate who has most consistently diagnosed our country's foreign policy blunders—**Ron Paul**—has been barred from Fox News's next GOP forum.

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sumer protection but government evisceration.

Acting CPSC chair Nancy Nord recently revealed the leadership's inclinations when she joined industry lobbyists in opposing a Senate bill that would increase her agency's power. She later admitted to traveling on the toy industry's dime.

But Nord is no pioneer. The CPSC's weakening dates back to the Reagan era, when the agency was first targeted for dissolution under the assumption that manufacturers can police themselves. Clinton appointee Ann Brown struggled to revive the agency. But Harold "Hal" Stratton, appointed chair by George W. Bush in 2002, swiftly restored the antiregulatory approach.

From the beginning, Stratton seemed an unlikely choice as the nation's consumer advocate. As Attorney General in New Mexico, Stratton had objected when AGs in other states brought consumer protection cases, claiming they were trying "to impose their own anti-business, pro-government regulation views." Later, representing oil and mining companies, he'd co-founded the Rio Grande Foundation to promote "individual freedom, limited government, and economic opportunity." And as a member of the Federalist Society and board of the Washington Legal Foundation, Stratton had joined the legal brotherhoods whose principal reason for being is to oppose government regulation as an intrusion on liberty and interference with free markets.

Stratton continued to promote that philosophy when he arrived in Washington. According to former CPSC staff and consumer advocates, on Stratton's watch the already feeble agency disintegrated: it lost more staff, reduced companies' requirements to report dangerous products and took years to investigate deadly hazards. "Hal Stratton was very weak in terms of promoting the agency's mission," says Robert Adler, professor of management at the University of North Carolina and former counsel to the CPSC.

More specifically, Stratton expanded loopholes that allowed companies not to report dangers involving their products; passed a mattress flammability standard that prevented consumers from suing over burn injuries; interfered with his agency's effort to recall dangerous BB guns; and spent much of his time traveling and dining with manufacturing executives, often at industry expense. But perhaps the most damning criticism of Stratton is that he never pressed Congress for the means necessary for the CPSC to do its job. With only half the staff it had in 1980 (including just one full-time toy safety inspector), the CPSC could investigate only a tiny fraction of the tens of thousands of complaints it received each year. Meanwhile, those investigations could take years while dangerous products continued to injure or even kill consumers. Mega Brands' Magnetix toys, for example, which contained powerful magnets that toddlers were swallowing, weren't recalled until one child died and twenty-seven others suffered serious intestinal injuries, despite repeated consumer warnings to the CPSC.

Hal Stratton no longer has to worry about such matters. As head of the "Product Safety" practice in the Washington office of the corporate law firm Dykema Gossett, he now advises companies on how to keep government regulators off their backs. "Being [at the CPSC] gave me the insight to know what the regulators expect," he has said. Stratton also consults for Intertek, a product-testing company that stands to profit handsomely from all the attention the avalanche of dangerous products has attracted. Pending legislation would require manufacturers to hire companies like Intertek (which lobbies the CPSC) to test their products before putting them on the market.

Stratton professes to be baffled about why all these product-safety problems are emerging now. And he is unapologetic about his tenure as chairman: "You can't test everything," he says. Were he still in the chairman's role, the mounting attention to his agency's failure might be making him squirm. But, as he put it recently, from his vantage point in private practice, "the more demand the better."

DAPHNE EVIATAR

Daphne Eviatar, a Brooklyn-based lawyer and journalist, is a senior reporter for The American Lawyer.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Mitt Romney as Doll

Yes, Mitt's so slick of speech and slick of garb, he
Reminds us all of Ken, of Ken and Barbie—
So quick to shed his moderate regalia,
He may, like Ken, be lacking genitalia.

Beyond the Labor Board

COMMENT

This past September, the National Labor Relations Board issued a startling sixty-one decisions in a legal blitzkrieg on working Americans. The NLRB has been led by a pro-business majority of Bush appointees since 2002. Its bias was never more apparent than during this latest round of decisions, labeled a "September massacre" by the AFL-CIO. One ruling makes it harder to join a union through majority sign-up procedures—the preferred organizing method for many unions that hold out little hope for fair and timely NLRB elections—while another allows employers to decertify existing unions using the very same forms of majority recognition now denied to union organizers. Other rulings facilitate employer discrimination against union supporters and limit remedies available to workers illegally fired for engaging in union activity. Canned for demanding a voice at the workplace? No back pay if you choose to walk a picket line instead of looking for a new job!

According to Jon Hiatt, general counsel for the AFL-CIO, "The Bush board has so changed the law, in terms of established precedent, that it's now virtually impossible for workers to get a fair shake, either in the unfair labor practices arena or the elections arena." Instead, the AFL-CIO is demanding the board be "shut down" until less partisan appointments are made to three recently vacated posts on the five-member board.

Bush's labor board may indeed be the worst in history, and a temporary shutdown couldn't be a bad thing. But it wouldn't

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address the deeper problems plaguing the labor movement, which date back at least to 1947, when the Taft-Hartley Act greatly curtailed workers' ability to strike and otherwise pressure employers to recognize unions. Since then, Democratic labor board majorities have had little positive effect on organizing. Private-sector union membership dropped steadily and by more than half between 1977 and 2000, while the two parties spent equal time in the White House. The Reagan years were particularly dismal, but labor didn't exactly thrive under the Carter and Clinton boards. Today less than 8 percent of private-sector workers belong to a union.

The Employee Free Choice Act—the majority card-check bill currently stalled by a Republican filibuster in the Senate and an assured presidential veto—is hailed by organized labor as one way out of this mess, but it's at best a partial solution. The legislation's actual effect on new organizing is uncertain, as it won't by itself change the broader antilabor climate that causes many campaigns to fail. It would leave intact many key Taft-Hartley restrictions, including a provision that allows individual states to pass the "right to work" laws that account for the virtual nonexistence of a Southern union movement.

An assortment of legal scholars, labor historians and trade unionists have called for a more far-reaching shift away from the labor board framework. Until the middle of the last century, workers regularly turned to an expansive interpretation of the Thirteenth Amendment banning "slavery and involuntary servitude" to legitimate their rights to organize and strike. Without the ability to form unions and threaten employers with collective action, they claimed, wage workers were powerless to improve working conditions and in effect bound to a contractual servitude. The amendment obliged the government to eliminate any such system. So these labor observers argue that the amendment could once again be a valuable organizing tool. When companies like meatpacking giant Smithfield engage in egregious unionbusting campaigns—or when regressive state legislation like New York's Taylor Law is used to criminalize striking mass-transit employees—workers would take their battles to the courts, demanding their rights to organize and strike under the Thirteenth Amendment.

"The Smithfield case is very much the kind of situation the amendment was created to redress," says Rutgers law professor James Pope. "Overall, the Thirteenth Amendment approach hinges on the idea that the labor movement ought to act as a real rights movement. A real rights movement conducts the struggle over a long-term time frame, and it fights over issues of basic principle." That basic principle applies equally to all workers—including those afforded little or no protection by the NLRB. Immigrant workers are arguably the greatest organizing priority for labor today, but their often irregular status makes them ill suited for board-certified organizing methods and vulnerable to abusive employers. "If you look back, slavery created a caste of workers of color who were denied citizenship rights, whose human rights were abused and whose work put them beneath the floor established for free labor," argues Maria Ontiveros, professor of law at the University of San Francisco. "To a great extent, that's where the undocumented population is today." The Thirteenth Amendment would provide a compelling moral and legal rationale for extending those workers full labor rights, which in turn would improve conditions for American workers at the bottom of the labor market.

Implementing the Thirteenth Amendment strategy will require some legal and tactical ingenuity. It has the potential, however, not only to protect a worker's right to organize from the vagaries of partisan politics but to galvanize a movement aimed at making labor rights an essential and unassailable feature of American democracy. MAX FRASER

Max Fraser, a journalist, directs The Nation Institute's internship program.

Comix Nation

by WARD SUTTON

... AND NOW A FRIENDLY PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM THE GROWTH HORMONE INDUSTRY.
DOES THIS HAPPEN TO YOU?
"NO ARTIFICIAL GROWTH HORMONES"? "NO rBGH"?
MILK
ALL I WANT IS MILK FOR MY BABIES! WHY DO THESE LABELS HAVE TO BE SO CONFUSING?!
UNFAIR, ISN'T IT? LABELS SHOULDN'T TELL YOU WHAT'S NOT IN MILK! WE AIM TO CHANGE THAT.
HOME SWEET HOME
OUR KINDLY SPOKESMAN
SUCH LABELS ARE UNFAIR TO PEOPLE LIKE FARMER BILL HERE, TOO.*
AW, SHUCKS! WITH ALL THIS CUSTOMER CONFUSION, HOW CAN MY LITTLE DOWN HOME HAPPY COW MILK FACTORY MEGACORP™ STAND A CHANCE IN THE MARKETPLACE?
MOO!
*MAN PICTURED IS NOT ACTUALLY FARMER BILL.
THANKFULLY, SOME STATE POLITICIANS ARE BEGINNING TO CATCH ON ...
SURE, LABELS ARE IMPORTANT. BUT NOT AS IMPORTANT AS MY CONSTITUENTS!
YAY!!
YAY!!
NO MORE LABELS!
Love, Monsanto
$
REMEMBER: WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN'T HURT YOU. AS FAR AS YOU KNOW.

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Alexander Cockburn

Against Dullness: The Campaigns So Far

It's time to take stock of the landscape. The American political system, as conditioned by corporate cash, the corporate press and legal obstructions to independent candidacies, is designed to eliminate any threat to business as usual. In the case of the Democrats, the winnowing process is working well. Mike Gravel, by far the most vivacious and radical of the party's candidates on substantive matters of war and empire, was swiftly marginalized. I've seen very few Gravel buttons.

Dennis Kucinich seems to have a lock on those Democrats prepared to stay true to a hopeless outsider. I don't understand this loyalty to the Ohio Congressman. The point of hopeless outsiders is to give us hope. It's a dialectical thing. They convince us that their cause is not hopeless, is worth fighting for. Kucinich gives me no hope. He has barely shouldered his way into single digits. His signs and buttons and stickers already look as though they're collectibles on eBay.

The three major Democratic contenders for the nomination are all unalluring. John Edwards is offering us a populist package, with homilies on fair trade, gaps between rich and poor, corporate greed and so forth. Decent people, including many labor organizers, are working for him. I don't believe a word he says. His record on war and empire is bad. He has poor judgment. Why spend $400 to have a hairdo that makes you look like a slick lawyer with a fancy haircut?

Barack Obama? I can't remember a single substantive statement he's made. In terms of political philosophy and pragmatic intention, his platform is like the Anglican clergyman's answer when asked for his conception of God: an oblong blur. When he's pressed, Obama's positions on war and empire are usually very bad. Talk about "moving beyond partisan differences" invariably ends with the Establishment's long-term goal of abolishing Social Security.

Hillary Clinton is the candidate for corporate power at home and empire abroad. She argued passionately in the White House for the NATO bombing of Belgrade. Two days after September 11, 2001, she was calling for a broad war on terror. She voted for the Patriot Act. When it came time for Mrs. Clinton to deliver her speech in support of the attack on Iraq, she reiterated some of the most outlandish claims made by Dick Cheney.

On the Republican side, I've liked Mike Huckabee. He had a decent record as governor of Arkansas and deserves support if only for his moral and political courage in his pardoning or sentence commutations of more than 1,000 convicted criminals. These acts of mercy and faith in rehabilitation have been predictably attacked by some chortling liberals because one of those whose parole he may have prompted subsequently killed someone. This is an unavoidable risk unless you achieve certainty by execution or a sentence of life without the possibility of parole—which will be the trend if states continue to abandon the death penalty. Juries will have less compunction in convicting if the penalty is LWOP rather than death. Of course, these days parole itself is harder and harder to win in all states. The release on New Year's Eve of the 77-year-old Sara Jane Moore after thirty-two years in prison for trying to kill our greatest President since Warren Harding is, alas, scarcely a precedent. This parole, incidentally, was won by two young attorneys from the Bay Area: Scott Fleming and Scott Handleman, the latter a close friend of mine and indeed my former intern here at *The Nation*. But Huckabee, particularly since he took on board a big-name political strategist, Ed Rollins, has made bad mistakes, flip-flopping on his enlightened position on immigration and invoking the awful John Bolton as a foreign policy counselor. Nonetheless, I have a soft spot for the guy, if only because he has real populist character and has panicked the Establishment into regrouping round John McCain as the Republican match to HRC, as the bipartisan candidate of choice. But my favorite remains Ron Paul, rock-solid against war and empire and the neoliberal corporate state. He's a principled fellow who's won passionate support (and millions in modest cash contributions) from ordinary Americans. I recently drove down I-5 from Washington through Oregon to Northern California, and "Ron Paul" signs were almost the only ones I saw. I like the look of the people behind them.

The case for Paul as a candidate leftists can and should support is powerfully made on our *CounterPunch* website by Jeff Taylor, a onetime Wellstone enthusiast. I encourage everyone to read the case Taylor makes at www.counterpunch.org/taylor01022008.html. As Taylor writes, "Not only does Ron Paul represent Jeffersonian values usually termed 'conservative' or 'libertarian' today (fidelity to the Constitution, frugal government, states' rights, Second Amendment, national sovereignty), but he is also a leading example of support for Jeffersonian positions nowadays described as 'liberal' or 'leftist' (e.g. opposition not only to the Iraq War but to war in general, anti-imperialism, ending the federal war on drugs, hostility to the Patriot Act and other violations of civil liberties). This accounts for the wide appeal of the Paul campaign. It's precisely the sort of trans-ideological, cross-generational populist-libertarian-moralist coalition that I was hoping to see with a Feingold presidential campaign."

Will there be other candidates? Bloomberg may run, but he certainly doesn't make my pulse beat faster. Ralph Nader? He told me on New Year's Eve that he'd make up his mind in a month. The same day he endorsed Edwards, which presumably helps Ralph's cred with the trial lawyers. So if HRC becomes the certain nominee, Ralph may run. If he does, he should campaign solely in Ohio and Florida. For now I hope Paul makes a break for it and runs as an Independent. That would be exciting. All great seasons in politics begin with excitement. Right now there's none. ■

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Katha Pollitt

Maternity Fashions, Junior Size

Teens getting pregnant: bad. Teens having babies: good. If this makes no sense to you, wake up and smell the Enfamil. It's 2008!

The hot movie is *Juno*, a funnyquirkybittersweet indie about a pregnant high school hipster who gives her baby up for adoption. The hot celebrity is Jamie Lynn Spears, 16-year-old sister of Britney and star of Nickelodeon's *Zoey 101*, who's pregnant and having the baby because she wants to "do what's right." The teen birthrate, after falling for fourteen years, is up 3 percent, a phenomenon perhaps not unrelated to the fact that abstinence-only sex ed, although demonstrably ineffective at preventing sexual activity and linked to higher rates of unprotected sex, is the only sex ed taught in 35 percent of our schools. (Although maybe teens are having babies for the same reasons grown women are—the birthrate for adults is up, too.)

Written by a woman, Diablo Cody, *Juno* has been called the woman's answer to *Knocked Up*, Judd Apatow's hugely successful tribute to accidental fatherhood. Apatow's men are sweet, wisecracking slackers, boys who just want to have fun—porn, pot, fantasy baseball; the women are tightly wound taskmistresses, life's wet blankets. (I thought this dynamic was pretty obvious, but when *Knocked Up* star Katherine Heigl observed in *Vanity Fair* that the movie was "a little sexist," all hell broke loose. How ungrateful! Didn't she know actresses are supposed to be seen and not heard?) In *Juno*, the pregnant girl is the central figure, a witty oddball who drives all the action, beginning with the sex; neither the boy nor her father and stepmother, a well-meaning but rather oblivious pair, much affect her decisions. Thus, Juno goes for an abortion alone, without even telling her parents she's pregnant. In real life, this would most likely have been impossible, because nearly all states in the Midwest (where the movie is set) have parental notification or consent laws. But it's a big advance in realism over *Knocked Up* or *Waitress*, last year's other celebration of unplanned pregnancy as the key to getting your life together, neither of which so much as mentioned the A-word. Juno flees the clinic waiting room, grossed out by a punk receptionist who offers her some boysenberry-flavored condoms ("they make [my boyfriend's] junk smell like pie") and given pause by a pro-life protester classmate who tells her her fetus already has fingernails. She decides to give the baby to a deserving couple, and remarkably her parents go along with this.

Juno is a witty, moving but not sentimental film that made both women I saw it with cry. Juno herself is a prickly, winsome, complex and original person: she wears work shirts, plays the guitar and has a luminous intelligence and a pixielike nonsexy beauty, and that is a way young girls are almost never portrayed in films. Still, and maybe this is why I remained dry-eyed, I couldn't get over my sense that, hard as the movie worked to be a story about particular individuals, not a sermon, it was basically saying that for a high school junior to go through pregnancy and childbirth to give a baby to an infertile couple is both noble and cool, of a piece with loving indie rock and scorning cheerleaders; it's fetal fingernails versus boysenberry condoms. To its credit, the film doesn't demonize teen sex; still, a teen who saw this movie would definitely feel like a moral failure for choosing abortion. Do we really want young girls to feel like they have to play babysanta? The mother in me winced at Juno, that wisp of a child-woman, going through the ordeal of pregnancy and childbirth.

Juno is sensible enough to realize she's just a kid and makes the choice that not long ago was forced on middle-class white girls. These days, 29 percent of pregnant teens have abortions; 14 percent miscarry; of the 57 percent who carry to term, less than 1 percent give up the baby. Paradoxically, the women's movement destigmatized single motherhood and thus helped make a world in which some of the old justifications for abortion no longer seem so forceful. Now it's abortion that is a badge of shame and "irresponsibility."

But feminists aren't the only ones over a barrel here. It has been amusing watching the anti-choicers squirm as they laud Jamie Lynn Spears's "life-affirming decision" to add a new member to pop culture's most notoriously dysfunctional family. Even Mike Huckabee—the candidate who protested that he was too busy to keep up with the NIE report on Iran's nuclear program—called it a "tragedy" before adding, "Apparently, she's going to have the child, and I think that is the right decision, a good decision, and I respect that and appreciate it." Off the campaign trail, Jamie Lynn has been getting a royal slut-shaming: a football player could probably have killed someone and gotten less criticism—as long as he didn't kill a baby, that is. Especially a really cute one. Or a dog. Even the *New York Times* ran a front-page story about how "disappointed" are the parents of the young girls who adore *Zoey 101*. As if it's unusual for 16-year-olds to have sex. Maybe if so many parents didn't have the idiotic idea that "perfect" girls like Zoey actually exist, they would talk to their daughters about birth control instead of assuming, as Jamie Lynn's mother did, that Jamie was "conscientious" because she always met her curfew. Mama Spears's parenting book has been put on hold, reportedly replaced by a million-dollar baby-photo deal made by Jamie Lynn.

Just to bring the whole reproductive carnival full circle, Florida's "Choose Life" license plates, of which more than 40,000 have been sold, have raised more than $4 million for low-income single moms. But there's a catch: only women who choose adoption qualify. A woman who wants to keep her baby can just go starve in hell. Since only a handful of women want to give away their babies—even among pregnant women who plan on adoption, 35 percent change their mind once the baby is born—the money is just sitting there. Maybe someone, someday will make a movie about that. ■

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PRIMARIES GONE WILD!

AND HOW TO FIX THEM

JOHN NICHOLS

If we don't fix the nominating process this year, it will be even worse in 2012.

Forget the debate about separation of church and state, at least when it comes to this year's first presidential caucuses and primaries. In late December and early January, along the back roads of Iowa and the country lanes spoking out from New Hampshire villages, campaign signs for not just fundamentalist Republican Mike Huckabee but for more secularly inclined Democrat John Edwards ended up sharing front-yard space with Nativity scenes. That's what happens when the nominating processes of two parties get front-loaded into the thick of the holiday season.

That front-loading means that the decisions made before the Twelve Days of Christmas were finished began a frenzy of caucuses and primaries that, in barely a month, is all but certain to identify the presidential nominees. If anything, the sped-up process made Iowa and New Hampshire more important, since strong showings at the start became all the more essential. That's because, despite the candidates' having spent years amassing millions in campaign funds, few will have enough to buy the television commercials they'll need to compete in the February 5 "Tsunami Tuesday," when more than twenty states, from New York to California, will be voting as part of the most absurdly accelerated, money-driven, grassroots-stomping and confusing nominating process in the history of the Republic.

Front-loading is not an entirely new phenomenon. Since the modern primary system came into being in 1968 and 1972, notes Tova Wang, a Democracy Fellow with the Century Foundation, "states have tried to outmaneuver each other for attention and influence" while "the parties have attempted to hold back that scramble." As the 2008 process took shape, however, any semblance of order was lost. What University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato refers to as "scheduling insanity" took hold. With the key players aware that party conventions are little more than theatrical productions, state officials seeking to leap ahead of schedules established by party chieftains no longer took seriously threats by the national committees to dock delegates from the summer sessions. Besides, the starting-gate jumpers calculated, the eventual nominees would invariably allow seating of delegations from states where they must compete in November. So Michigan, Florida and other states set January primary and caucus dates, forcing Iowa and New Hampshire officials to defend their franchises by moving close to Christmas.

"It's awful," says Gwen Carr, a former Democratic National Committee staffer. "No one can make any sense of it except the insiders, and even they are having trouble."

This year's nomination process is troublesome on many levels. And the need to clean it up is an urgent if little understood corollary to the current contest. It's too late to fix 2008, but now is the time to get serious about repairing the process. Every engaged observer agrees that if reforms are not implemented, the front-loading will only speed up in 2012, as states break the New Year's barrier and create a schedule that could see delegate

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THE ANTIDOTE TO MURDOCHIZATION

Katrina vanden Heuvel,
Editor & Publisher of *The Nation*

Rupert Murdoch,
Owner of practically everything else

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selection begin a year before the party nominees face off.

To halt the slide toward anarchy, reformers must sort through a dizzying array of proposals, from schemes to establish national or regional primaries to a lottery system that would allow time for grassroots candidacies to emerge. They should ask tough questions about whether caucuses are democratic in spirit or practice. They should recognize that Congressional intervention may be necessary to force parties and states to do the right thing. And they must understand, as FairVote's Ryan O'Donnell says, that "once an incumbent is nominated and elected, he or she has no interest in changing the schedule."

If there is no action before next summer's Republican convention, where GOP rules require the party to begin making changes, what O'Donnell calls the "multiple levels of institutional inertia" will kick in, and the opening for reform will start to close. Unfortunately, there's little sense of urgency. More often than not, even activists who have become passionately involved in debates about voting machines and disenfranchisement neglect the need to address the nominating process.

"How the candidates are nominated defines everything else, yet people get so focused on the horse race that they don't always pay enough attention to the need to make the process functional and democratic," says Rob Richie, an expert on electoral systems who directs FairVote—The Center for Voting and Democracy, which has positioned itself as a key player in the push for reform. "That's the problem, because we have to have more people involved in seeking reform if it's going to happen." Richie is involved, as are assorted reformers, academics, party insiders and political veterans like former Tennessee Senator Bill Brock and California Democratic Party executive board member David Phelps, who have formed a bipartisan Fix the Primaries group, the stated purpose of which is promoting "far-reaching reform options."

The need for a radical reordering goes far beyond the challenges that arose when Iowans struggled to match blue Obama yard signs with green Christmas lights. In a country where the media and political classes far prefer a presidential horse race to the slog of governing, the theater of a front-loaded nominating process is so irresistible that ambitious legislators and journalists exit Washington for Iowa faster than you can say "unfinished business." Obama skipped a key vote on Iran—and then condemned Clinton for showing up and voting with the Bush Administration. Clinton, Obama, Joe Biden, Chris Dodd and John McCain all missed the November vote on the Peru Free Trade Agreement, which set the agenda for future trade debates. This is not a new phenomenon, but "senatorial debilitation"—to borrow a phrase from former Maine Senator Margaret Chase Smith, who once proposed a constitutional amendment to boot senators who spent too much time campaigning—is now so thorough that even revelations of presidential lawlessness (for instance, former White House press secretary Scott McClellan's allegation that Bush was in on the plot to discredit former Ambassador Joe Wilson) aren't enough to draw media attention away from kaffeeklatsches in New Hampshire.

Just as governing suffers, so too does politics. "Concluding the nomination process in the winter for all intents and purposes leaves the parties' nominees in waiting, and voters with a vacuum for many months, until the conventions in the late summer," explains Wang. "That gap tends to induce the anointed candidates to focus on raising private money while the public's attention subsides, reducing the amount of time that might be more productively devoted to debating the major issues."

The current nominating process is so antithetical to grassroots activism in any but a handful of states that the best bet is that the two nominees will be more in tune with big donors and Washington consultants than with base voters or the zeitgeist. The front-loading has made Iowa eccentrics and check-writing cynics even more supreme than they already were. And Iowa's supposed make-or-break influence has little to do with political prescience. A candidate's ability to win its caucuses does not necessarily translate into winning the state in the general election—2004 Democratic caucus winner John Kerry went on to be the first Democrat since Walter Mondale to lose the state in November. Yet it was a first-place finish in Iowa that gave Kerry the publicity surge and fundraising force that finished off Howard Dean in New Hampshire. Dean might have been able to undo the damage of Iowa—including the media obsession with his caucus-night "scream"—if he'd had a little more time. But there was no breathing space in 2004, and there is even less in 2008: New Hampshire starts voting less than 100 hours after Iowa caucusing finishes. Then comes the mad rush ending with the February 5 tsunami. "I get dizzy just thinking about it," says a Democratic campaign strategist. "We go for broke in Iowa and New Hampshire, but after that I don't know where to put the candidate, where to buy ads. It's crazy."

'We go for broke in Iowa and New Hampshire, but after that I don't know where to put the candidate.... It's crazy.' —Democratic strategist

Huckabee's surge might appear to call into question a trend that favors name recognition, big money and connections. But even Huckabee's supposedly low-budget campaign—which spent millions in Iowa and New Hampshire—owes less to the media fantasy of his "folksy charm" than a sophisticated appeal to religious prejudice against Mormon Mitt Romney. That reality has GOP insiders writing off the Arkansas evangelical on the theory that, while Huckabee's appeal might prevail in states where low-turnout caucuses and primaries heighten the influence of his evangelical base, he can be stomped in the February 5 "money race." No one knows the minimum needed to compete seriously on that day, but it could easily be $25 million.

Can this rigged system be reordered to create a fair fight in 2012? Yes, but it depends on the ability of reformers to capture a moment when, as veteran political strategist Steve Cobble, a longtime advocate of reform, says, "disgust with how it has all played out will be fresh enough, even among candidates and consultants, to create an opening for real reform."

Unfortunately, even if most of the political class is disgusted, a few key players can still thwart action. After all, it was Karl

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Rove who effectively created the current crisis when he blocked a Republican task force proposal to restore order with a rational and competitive primary schedule. Under the so-called Delaware Plan, the smallest twelve states would have chosen delegates in March, the next smallest fourteen in April, the next thirteen in May and the remainder in June. The schedule was designed to assure that the majority of delegates would not be chosen until the end, increasing the chance that a long, serious race for the nomination would play out over four months.

The Delaware Plan was to be debated at the 2000 convention, but Rove canceled it. "It had nothing to do with the merits of the plan," explained former Wyoming party chair Tom Sansonetti, who headed the task force. "It was just that the convention was scripted, and there was no room for a floor fight on whether or not the Delaware Plan should be adopted or whether the party was going to stay with its present system." The general sense among political insiders is that had the GOP embraced the reform, the Democrats would have done the same. But when the Republicans stopped talking about repairing the process, the discussion died.

The American Plan reform would give candidates with less money time to score breakthroughs and compete with better-funded contenders.

Like many good ideas put on hold by Rove, the Delaware Plan or some variant merits reconsideration. It is far superior to holding a "national primary," which was advocated for many years by progressive reformers. On the surface, a national primary makes sense, as it would allow members of each party to vote on the same day to select candidates. The problem is that in the absence of fundamental campaign finance and media reform, a national primary would replicate most of the pathologies of November elections, with soundbites and thirty-second commercials defining a big-money, small-idea race. The same goes for regional primaries. As Cobble, a strategist for Jesse Jackson's 1988 campaign who is now aiding Dennis Kucinich's quest for the Democratic nomination, says, "The idea of regional primaries taking place on or around the same day is even dumber than a national primary. Not only do candidates have to run media campaigns across various states, which creates a barrier to grassroots and insurgent campaigns; the early stages of the race—which are still likely to be most influential—can be distorted by regional issues that will differ radically if the voting starts in New England versus the South."

A number of savvy reformers, such as California's Tom Gangale, have come around to supporting a scheme, referred to as the American Plan, that in several senses builds on the strengths of the Delaware Plan. The American Plan is designed to begin with contests in states with small populations and then build over an extended period to primaries in bigger states. The schedule would give candidates with low name recognition and small bank accounts time to score breakthrough wins early and then attract the attention, contributions and support needed to compete with better-known and better-funded contenders in bigger states.

Running from March to June of election years, the American Plan would play out over ten two-week intervals, during which states selected by lot choose delegates. In the first interval, combinations of very small states with a total of eight or fewer Congressional districts—such as New Mexico with five, Maine with two and the District of Columbia with one—would hold primaries or caucuses. The point is to encourage door-to-door "retail politicking" at the opening of the process.

The random selection, via a lottery held a year or more before states choose delegates, would break the Iowa/New Hampshire stranglehold and allow states that are more diverse—such as New Mexico, with its large Hispanic population, and Mississippi, with its large African-American population—to be in the running for first-primary status. It would also stagger the schedule that follows the early contests, avoiding front-loading and creating a situation that would allow grassroots campaigns to build over time, as Jimmy Carter's did in 1976.

Whether the American Plan is the exact fix is not the point. FairVote's Richie and the group of reformers associated with the Fix the Primaries project—which includes Republicans like former Senator Brock and Sansonetti, who have worked hard to advance reforms within their party, along with California Democrats like Damian Carroll and David Phelps—go out of their way to highlight all the serious proposals. These include the American Plan, the Delaware Plan, various regional plans and even the national primary scheme. What they really want is for Congress and the parties to create a bipartisan commission to examine the options.

Party officials don't like the idea of Congressional involvement, as was clear last year when Senators Amy Klobuchar and Lamar Alexander proposed a regional primary system. The parties balked, claiming Congress has no authority to tell them how to nominate candidates. That's not necessarily true. With voting rights laws, federal grants to the states for the purchase of election machinery and federal funding of campaigns, Congress is already involved in the nominating process. This year the Federal Election Commission will give the Republican and Democratic national committees $4 million apiece to run their conventions. As Tova Wang explains, "The balance of opinion seems to be that the federal government can play some role." But what role? Rather than proposing a sweeping fix of its own, Congress might do best by prodding the parties with the universal lubricant of American politics: money. Of course, establishing full public financing remains the most appealing reform. But short of that, Congress could promise federal grants to cover all expenses incurred by states that run primaries on a schedule proposed by the commission and accepted by the national parties. That incentive might also encourage states to do away with antidemocratic caucuses, which in 2004 attracted less than 6 percent of eligible voters in Iowa and less than 3 percent in the ten other caucus states.

Even with prodding from Congress, the challenge of getting parties to embrace workable reforms is daunting. Yet it must become a piece of the broader electoral puzzle. Instead of merely complaining about a process that is not putting all its

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Are you missing the luxury of warm, relaxing baths? Well, grab your towel!

By John Fleming

For many of us, nothing is more relaxing than a long, luxurious bath. Unfortunately, because of safety concerns, many people, particularly older people, have to forego this simple pleasure. Sure, you can spend big bucks to remodel your bathroom to provide a bathtub you can use, but who wants to do that? Now there's a better way, and it lets you use the bath that's in your home today.

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flaws on display, those committed to democratizing it must challenge the likely nominees to support the Fix the Primaries proposal for a bipartisan commission. And activists should work to assure that this summer's party conventions find room for what Rove shut out in 2000: a serious discussion of how to avoid the chaos of a front-loaded, frequently shifting yet always money- and media-defined nominating process.

Wang points out that the current problems cannot be ignored by those who would repair our political system. "Like other issues that the voting and civil rights communities devote attention to, the flaws in the primary process present a serious challenge to fair and equitable representation," she says. "Now that the primaries are an expected and important part of the presidential election system, reform groups [need to start addressing] them in accordance with the same democratic principles as they do for general elections." ■

The Democratic Foreign Policy Wars

All the candidates reject Bush's disasters—but that's not enough for the next administration.

by ARI BERMAN

At the *Des Moines Register* presidential debate in December, Barack Obama was asked how voters could expect him to provide a "break from the past" when many of his top foreign policy advisers were holdovers from the Clinton Administration. Obama gracefully parried the challenge by saying he was willing to take good advice from several previous administrations, not just Bill Clinton's. But the question did reflect a common suspicion that despite all his talk about providing "change," the Obama campaign's differences with Hillary Clinton on foreign policy may be more stylistic than substantive.

It's true that a number of Obama's key advisers—like former National Security Adviser Tony Lake, former Assistant Secretary of State Susan Rice and former Navy Secretary Richard Danzig—held prominent positions under Bill Clinton. At the same time, Obama's team includes some of the most forward-thinking members of the Democratic foreign policy establishment—like Joseph Cirincione and Lawrence Korb of the Center for American Progress, the party's leading experts on nonproliferation and defense issues, respectively, along with former counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke and Carter Administration National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. Added to the mix are fresh faces who were at times critical of the Clinton Administration, like Harvard professor Samantha Power, author of "*A Problem From Hell*", a widely acclaimed history of US responses to genocide. These names suggest that Obama may be more open to challenging old Washington assumptions and crafting new approaches.

Hillary Clinton's camp, meanwhile, is filled with familiar faces from her husband's administration, like former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and former UN Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. Unlike Obama's advisers, the top Clintonites overwhelmingly supported the war in Iraq. From the march to war onward, Clinton and her advisers have dominated foreign policy discussions inside the Democratic Party. After largely supporting the war, they resisted

TIM ROBINSON

calls for an exit strategy until 2005, when the situation had become unmanageably bleak. After turning against the war the Clintonites argued retroactively that Senator Clinton had voted, in Holbrooke's words, "to empower the President to avoid war."

As the nation hurtles from the January primaries to the "Super Tuesday" of February 5, top Democrats continue to develop their views on a number of foreign policy questions. How and when should America withdraw its troops from Iraq? How should we manage Iran? How should US power be deployed in the post-Bush era? How should foreign policy deal with global warming, the rise of China and India, an increasingly multipolar world and the continuing threat of nuclear proliferation? Perhaps it's too much to expect candidates to lay out a comprehensive vision for the new era in the heat of a presidential campaign. But how the campaigns address these questions today offers a window into how they'll govern tomorrow.

Hillary's campaign portrays its foreign policy team as a big tent. At the top are the troika of Albright, Holbrooke and former Clinton National Security Adviser Sandy Berger. Albright is very close to Hillary and a key confidante and surrogate. Berger is a skilled behind-the-scenes operative who keeps the troops in line. More on Holbrooke in a moment. Close behind are policy figures who also play a political role, like retired Gen. Wesley Clark and former Ambassador Joseph Wilson, who are popular with the party's antiwar base and appear on the campaign

Ari Berman is a Nation *contributing writer.*

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trail; Clark appears in the campaign's TV ads. (Clinton supporters who backed Bush's recent "surge" of troops in Iraq, like Kenneth Pollack and Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution, are now kept at arm's length, although Clinton does consult with Gen. Jack Keane, an architect of the troop increase.) Following the old guard are a younger crop of less hawkish experts, like Steven Simon of the Council on Foreign Relations, who co-chairs an advisory group on terrorism, and Iran specialists Ray Takeyh and Vali Nasr, who favor broad US engagement with Iran. At the center is Lee Feinstein, a former State Department official whom Clinton plucked from CFR in July and made the campaign's national security director. Feinstein wrote a controversial *Foreign Affairs* essay in 2004 with Princeton professor Anne-Marie Slaughter arguing that in cases of humanitarian catastrophe, "the biggest problem with the Bush preemption strategy may be that it does not go far enough." Today Feinstein says, "Unilateral action that involves force ought to be avoided at all costs," and "a clear reading of my piece is a strong rebuttal of the Bush doctrine."

Richard Holbrooke, who leads Hillary Clinton's foreign policy cabinet-in-exile, is 'the heaviest of the heavyweights,' says Peter Galbraith.

Of the top Clinton Administration staffers, Albright, who's 70 and has already served in the upper echelon of government, and Berger, who became a controversial figure after smuggling classified documents from the National Archives, are unlikely to return in a Hillary Clinton administration. That leaves Holbrooke, other than Bill himself, as the most commanding member of Hillary's foreign policy cabinet-in-exile. "He's the heaviest of the heavyweights," says Peter Galbraith, Bill Clinton's former ambassador to Croatia. Galbraith worked closely with Holbrooke in the Balkans and remains a close friend as well as a Hillary supporter. Holbrooke personifies the strong feelings those in the Democratic foreign policy community harbor toward the Clintons: they respect Holbrooke's experience, accomplishments and intelligence but are dismayed at his arrogance, political opportunism and hawkish posturing. Clinton insiders speculate that if Hillary assumes the presidency, Holbrooke could very well land the Secretary of State position he's always coveted.

Like Clinton, Holbrooke seems to have been groomed for higher office. He's been described by pundits as "the raging bull of US diplomacy," "the closest thing the party has to a Kissinger," "a man driven to be a central protagonist in the shaping of the American empire." Just look at his résumé: a young foreign service officer in Vietnam under the tutelage of JFK's best and brightest; Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia in the Carter Administration (where he controversially cultivated Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos and supported Indonesia during its brutal occupation of East Timor); a successful Wall Street banker in the 1980s; the architect of the Dayton Accords, which ended the fighting in Bosnia; UN ambassador; the list goes on.

Holbrooke's brand of "muscular liberalism" has come to define Hillary. He helped shape not only Bill Clinton's but Hillary's views on the necessity of using force in Bosnia and consulted with her frequently about her vote on Iraq. "I know her well, I saw her through that period, I accept it 100 percent," he said in September. Indeed, in his last press conference as UN ambassador, Holbrooke called Saddam Hussein "a clear and present danger at all times" and said the incoming Bush Administration "will have to deal with this problem," reflecting the Clinton Administration's official policy of regime change. In the run-up to war, Holbrooke was quoted in the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* every week. He urged President Bush to go to the UN but afterward said Bush had "ample justification" to invade Iraq and wrote that antiwar demonstrators, along with the French and German governments, had "undoubtedly encouraged" Saddam. In the 2004 campaign, Holbrooke became a key foreign policy adviser to John Kerry. Like Hillary, Holbrooke took a particularly cautious tack on Iraq, telling Kerry to keep his views on the war "deliberately vague."

After the election, as figures like former Clinton Defense Secretary William Perry and Representative John Murtha turned against the war, Holbrooke refused to say how the United States should extricate itself from Iraq. "I'm not prepared to lay out a detailed policy or strategy," he said in December 2005, around the time that Clinton wrote a letter to her constituents defending her vote for the war. A year later, after events on the ground had spiraled even further out of control, Holbrooke, like Clinton, finally argued that the United States should "start to disengage from Iraq while pressing hard for a political settlement." He testified before Congress opposing Bush's troop surge and rebutted Gen. David Petraeus's presentation in support of it this past September, though he noted that, unlike Senate Democrats, he opposed using the Congressional power of the purse to end the war.

As Holbrooke found his footing on Iraq, however, he remained one of the leading hawks in Hillaryland on Iran. In 2004 he told the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, "The Iranians are an enormous threat to the United States, the stability in the region, and to the state of Israel" and claimed the European Union would "never get their act together." Holbrooke has twice spoken at rallies against Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in New York, comparing him to Hitler. At a November 27 speech in Toronto, Holbrooke listed the reasons the Bush Administration would not attack Iran but called the country "the most pressing problem nation" and "the most dangerous country in the region," accusing the Iranians of exporting explosives "that are killing Americans in Iraq."

Little Holbrooke said about Iran could have prepared one for the latest National Intelligence Estimate, which found that the country had abandoned its nuclear program in 2003 as a result of diplomatic pressure. "It significantly decreases the likelihood of a military confrontation with Iran," Holbrooke told me after the NIE became public. "You have to keep all options on the table, but I thought even pre-NIE that there was no justification for a military strike." He stressed, however, that America needed

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About Your Professor

Robert Whaples is Professor of Economics and Chair of the Department of Economics at Wake Forest University. He earned his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Pennsylvania, where his dissertation won the Allen Nevins Prize for the Outstanding Dissertation in American Economic History from the Economic History Association. He has also won the Association's Jonathan Hughes Prize for Excellence in Teaching Economic History.

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to remain vigilant about Iran. "It's good news that Iran is much, much further from a nuclear weapons capability," Holbrooke said. "But that doesn't change the fact that they are still a deeply destabilizing regime—supporting Hamas, Hezbollah. And they need to be part of the solution in Iraq."

Iran is a particularly sensitive topic among Clinton supporters. Her September vote for the Senate's Kyl-Lieberman amendment, which dubbed the Iranian Revolutionary Guard a terrorist organization and accused Iran of fomenting violence in Iraq, aroused a furor among establishment Democrats and grassroots activists. Peter Galbraith, who knows the region well, circulated a statement in the Senate opposing the resolution. "The reason I was so opposed to Kyl-Lieberman was because it was based on the premise that Iran was undermining US efforts in Iraq, and that's just not true," Galbraith told me. Joe Wilson said he also opposed Kyl-Lieberman, primarily because "I don't trust Lieberman or Kyl."

General Clark, who commanded NATO under Bill Clinton, quickly defended Hillary's vote, writing in New Hampshire's *Manchester Union-Leader* that "she is forcing the Bush administration to apply diplomatic pressure." Clark told *The Nation*, "The people harping and carping on the vote and comparing it to her vote on Iraq are oversimplifying the complexities of real diplomacy." In an NPR debate following the NIE release, Clinton argued, based on what her advisers said the military had told them, that because of the Kyl-Lieberman vote, "we've seen changes in their behavior." As Iran heated up as a campaign issue, Clinton's advisers welcomed the NIE with a degree of relief. "It removes this as a campaign issue for Democrats," said Lee Feinstein. He noted that Clinton, like Obama, "supports direct negotiations with Iran, now."

Even if Iran is off the table, as Feinstein hopes, Iraq is not. How many troops Clinton would remove from Iraq—and how quickly—remains a source of contention in Democratic policy circles. "We have remaining vital national security interests in Iraq," Clinton told the *New York Times* in March. That includes, her advisers say, fighting Al Qaeda there, preventing Iranian arms from crossing the border, protecting the Kurds and possibly training Iraqi security forces, depending on their capabilities. Clinton has pledged to start withdrawing troops in her first sixty days in office but until recently refused to specify when most of them would come home and how many would stay behind. In a policy shift, she said on December 20 that "we can bring nearly everybody home, you know, certainly within a year." Feinstein said the remaining troops would engage in a much narrower set of missions, probably entailing "special operations reinforced with air power," which he says "is far different than patrolling a civil war." Maj. Gen. Paul Eaton, who was in charge of training the Iraqi army in 2003–04 and is advising Clinton, contradicted Feinstein, predicting that such a residual force "is going to be fairly big."

Like Clinton, Obama has more than 200 foreign policy advisers. The campaigns have been dueling over who has the best bench. (Many people who have been linked with Obama are actually advising Clinton, her advisers say.) Obama's advisers tend to be younger, more progressive—having opposed the war from the start—and more likely to stress "soft power" issues like human rights, global development and the dangers of failed states.

The word Obama advisers use most often to describe Clinton is "conventional." As Brzezinski told me, "Look at her response on negotiations. It was conventional and politically convenient." He's referring to CNN's YouTube debate in July, when Obama said he'd meet with the leaders of countries like Cuba, Iran and North Korea without conditions. Clinton responded that she would not "be used for propaganda purposes" and later called Obama's statement "irresponsible and, frankly, naïve." The conventional wisdom was that Obama's answer displayed a stunning lack of presidential gravitas; Hillary dispatched her advisers to reinforce that point. But Obama unexpectedly turned the exchange to his advantage, accusing Clinton of "continuing with Bush/Cheney policies" and painting her as defender of an outdated status quo. "Her vote for the Iraq War and vote for the Kyl-Lieberman resolution are part of a go-along, conventional, momentary type of political thinking," Brzezinski says. Obama included these themes on the fifth anniversary of his 2002 speech opposing the war, assailing "the same old conventional thinking that got us into Iraq." After the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, he reiterated the point in criticizing Clinton's Iraq War vote, saying that "by going into Iraq, we got distracted from Afghanistan…we got distracted from dealing with the Al Qaeda havens that have been created in northwestern Pakistan."

Obama has been more willing than Clinton to redefine what it means to be 'tough' and to rethink the nature of American power.

Today, advisers like Tony Lake point to a number of "significant differences" between Obama and Clinton. On Iraq, Obama not only opposed the war but has said he would withdraw all combat troops within sixteen months of taking office. On Iran, Obama rejected the Kyl-Lieberman resolution (though he missed the vote while campaigning) and has proposed a broader engagement strategy to lure Iran into the community of nations. On nuclear weapons, he has not only promised to reduce US nuclear stockpiles, as has Clinton, but advocates a world free of nuclear weapons. On Cuba, Obama went to Miami and said the ban on family travel and remittances to the island nation should be lifted, a policy Clinton opposes.

Yet on many issues the differences between Obama and Clinton are more stylistic than substantive—which doesn't necessarily make them less interesting. In the eyes of his advisers, Obama signals the future and Clinton, the past. "Many of the younger former Clinton Administration officials who now support Obama feel that perhaps it is time for the baton to be passed to the next generation—Obama's generation," says Susan Rice. This sentiment is echoed by the elder Obama advisers. "I think Mrs. Clinton will take us back to the self-indulgence of the 1990s," says Brzezinski, "when the country was preoccupied by its own well-being and the leadership preoccupied with its own standing, not recognizing or taking advantage of the

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world as it was changing." Much of Hillary's campaign has been premised on a restoration of the Bill Clinton era; the word "restore" appears repeatedly in a recent *Foreign Affairs* article she wrote outlining her policy.

General Clark says it's overly simplistic to suggest that Clinton would take the country "back to the future," to borrow a phrase Bill Clinton used. "No one's proposing we go back to the 1990s," Clark says. "We need to take what we learned from the 1990s and apply it to new challenges." Indeed, in discussions with Hillary's advisers these days, the message seems to be, We're more like Obama than you think! Both candidates favor negotiating directly with Iran, leaving behind a residual force in Iraq (though Obama has said his missions would be more limited); enlarging the military by 92,000 troops; aggressively curbing global warming; and recommitting to working with multilateral institutions like the United Nations. It's not hard to imagine Clark, Feinstein or even Holbrooke serving in an Obama administration. And many Obamaites would probably work in a Hillary Clinton administration.

One point of contention is the question of experience. Clinton's campaign says Obama "would have less experience than any President since World War II," with Bill Clinton recently implying on *Charlie Rose* that voting for Obama would be "rolling the dice." Obama says Clinton's trips around the world as First Lady were little more than photo-ops. "I don't think being First Lady gives you any foreign policy experience," cracks former Kennedy speechwriter and Obama supporter Ted Sorensen, "except which donors sleep in the Lincoln Bedroom."

Sorensen sees parallels between the youthful vigor and idealism of Obama and JFK. If Obama is Kennedy, I asked Sorensen, who's Clinton? "She's LBJ," he responded, "particularly when it comes to the future of Iraq. Mrs. Clinton is talking about leaving combat troops in Iraq, maybe even whole divisions. That's where LBJ got into trouble in Vietnam."

The top Democrat who puts the least emphasis on foreign affairs and has the fewest number of advisers, John Edwards, has paradoxically said some of the most interesting things during the campaign. Edwards has called the "war on terror" a "bumper sticker, not a plan," and has opposed enlarging the Army, citing the "little rationale given for exactly why we need this many troops." Days before the Iowa caucuses, he more sharply distinguished his position on Iraq from those of Clinton and Obama by calling for a near-total pullout of US forces within ten months. However, in foreign policy circles Edwards's knowledge of world affairs is considered thin, and on the stump he's far more passionate about domestic issues like poverty and trade. His main foreign policy adviser, Mike Signer, was an aide to former Virginia Governor Mark Warner, and his longtime national security adviser in the Senate, Derek Chollet, is a Holbrooke protégé and a fellow at the Center for New American Security, a centrist think tank working to align Democrats closer to the military. Both are relatively hawkish; Signer wrote an essay in 2006 calling for a doctrine of "exemplarism," which he labeled "a militarily strong and morally ambitious version of American exceptionalism."

The Clintonites like to view Iraq as an isolated incident. "It is absurd to hold her or any candidate to a litmus-test standard based on a single vote under extremely complicated circumstances," Holbrooke said in a September radio interview. "She has said herself, 'If people don't like that vote, let them go elsewhere.'" To Obama, the vote for the war reflects a more fundamental reflection of poor judgment and political cowardice. Edwards, who co-sponsored the war resolution, has apologized for it and said, "I will not make that mistake again."

Hillary, though, has refused to apologize, and has often been packaged as a "quasi–Margaret Thatcher," Brzezinski said. "She is probably more assertive and willing to use force than her husband," Holbrooke said. Holbrooke acknowledges that in the wake of the Iraq disaster, it will be harder to carry out the type of humanitarian interventions that defined the Clinton Administration. In the case of Darfur, for example, none of the candidates have suggested sending US forces. "The standard will be higher," Holbrooke said. "The tests of an exit strategy will be higher. The risks will be higher." In the 1990s Holbrooke warned of "Vietnamalia syndrome," the aversion to using military power because of failures in Vietnam and Somalia, and says we cannot retreat now, either. "A swing from neoconservatism to neo-isolationism would not be a good deal."

Edwards has said some of the most interesting things about foreign policy—but he's far more passionate about domestic issues.

None of the Democratic candidates, of course, are advocating "neo-isolationism." But Obama has been more willing than Clinton to redefine what it means to be "tough" and to rethink the nature of American power, suggesting that the United States act with greater humility. He told the *New York Times*, "For most of our history our crises have come from using force when we shouldn't, not by failing to use force."

Statements like these raise the question of what a post-Bush foreign policy should look like. The next President must decide: will the "war on terror" continue? What about the Bush doctrine of preventive war or the escalating size of the military budget? Holbrooke says, "The next President needs to scrap a lot of things from the Bush Administration, and torture, Guantánamo and pre-emptive war should be on that list." Wesley Clark, too, says the concept of a "war on terror" was a "terrible mistake," and he calls the Bush doctrine "nonsense, rubbish." On these points Obama and Edwards concur.

But there are other crucial and less frequently mentioned topics to address: how will the next administration deal with a resurgent Russia, a rising China and a Latin America that has rejected the Washington/IMF neoliberal agenda, forging closer regional ties in its place? How will the United States handle rapidly growing world demand for oil and gas as reserves approach their peak? Is it a mistake to view the world primarily through the lens of Islamic extremism? How should the United States relate to Saudi Arabia and other autocratic Gulf states, and how should the United States address the Israel-Palestine conflict? How should we promote prosperity and

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stability in Africa? The foreign policy advisers in each Democratic campaign are still grappling with the answers.

The disastrous Bush presidency has upended many assumptions in DC policy circles, particularly about America's place in the world. This historic shift is helping to define the race for the Democratic nomination. All the candidates have sought to separate themselves from the Bush Administration—but rejection of the Bush/Cheney approach will not be enough to formulate a strategy for the next administration. As Obama has said, "The question is, What comes next?" ■

Castro Helps Chávez Avert a Coup

An Excerpt From *Fidel Castro: My Life (A Spoken Autobiography)*

"I congratulate you on your speech. It was an 'I came, I saw, I conquered' message of dignity and ethics," Fidel Castro wrote to Hugo Chávez on December 3, only hours after he had conceded the narrow defeat of his referendum to amend Venezuela's Constitution (and before Chávez undiplomatically denounced the outcome as a "*victoria de mierda*" for his opposition). As Castro reaches the twilight of his lengthy career as the Caesar of Latin American revolution, he is clearly invested in Chávez's effort to assume that mantle in the near future. "We discovered an educated, intelligent man, very progressive, an authentic Bolivarian," as Castro recalls their first meeting in the mid-1990s. "His adversaries have tried to get him by both force and economics. But he has faced all the oligarchy's, all of imperialism's assaults."

Indeed, in Castro's recounting, Cuba played a key role in Chávez's most dire challenge: the April 2002 coup attempt, which the Bush Administration at least tacitly supported. At a critical moment, when Chávez planned to fight to the finish against the superior military forces of the coup plotters, Castro urged him not to "sacrifice yourself" as Salvador Allende had in Chile, but to buy time for his supporters to rally. After Chávez surrendered, Castro then worked to mobilize mass opposition to the newly installed government and passed the message to the general leading the coup that there would be "a river of blood in Venezuela if this goes on." As the world well knows, after Chávez was held prisoner for two days, popular protests and his loyal military officers restored him to his democratically elected post as president. The rest is a dramatic history that continues to unfold.

Castro tells this previously untold story of his behind-the-scenes actions during the coup attempt—published here in English for the first time—in *Fidel Castro: My Life*. The book is based on a lengthy series of interviews conducted by *Le Monde diplomatique* editor Ignacio Ramonet and originally published in Spain. The revised and updated (by Castro personally) English edition hits bookstores this month. "Few men have known the glory of entering the pages of both history and legend while they are still alive," Ramonet writes in the introduction. "Fidel is one of them." Sidelined from power for health reasons as his Cuban revolution begins its fiftieth year, this "spoken autobiography" is likely to be among Castro's final contributions to the histories he created and the legends he fostered.

—Peter Kornbluh

REUTERS

Castro greets Chávez in Havana, January 2007.

On 11 April 2002 there was a coup in Caracas against Chávez. Were you following those events?

…I immediately realized that serious events were about to take place.… We learned that some high-ranking officers were speaking out against the president. It was being reported that the presidential guard had withdrawn and that the army was going to attack Miraflores [the presidential palace]. Several Venezuelans were calling friends of theirs in Cuba to say goodbye, because they were ready to resist and die; they were talking specifically about sacrificing their lives for their country.…

Beginning early that afternoon, I kept trying to phone the Venezuelan president. I couldn't get through! After midnight, at 12:38 AM on 12 April, I received news that Chávez was on the line.

I asked him what the situation was at the moment. He replied: 'We're dug in here in the Palacio [Miraflores]. We've lost the military guard that would have decided the issue. They've cut off our television feed. I have no forces to move [as on a chessboard or in battle], but I'm analysing the situation.' I quickly asked him, 'What forces do you have there with you?'

'Between 200 and 300 exhausted men.'

'Any tanks?' I asked.

Peter Kornbluh directs the Cuba Documentation Project at the National Security Archive, a public interest research center in Washington, DC. This excerpt copyright © from the forthcoming book Fidel Castro: My Life *by Fidel Castro and Ignacio Ramonet, to be published by Scribner, an imprint of Simon & Schuster, Inc. Printed by permission.*

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'No. There were some, but they withdrew them back to their base.'

I asked again, 'What other forces do you have?'

And he answered: 'There are some that are far away, but I have no communication with them.' He was referring to General Raúl Isaías Baduel and the paratroopers, the Armoured Division and other forces, but he'd lost all communication with those loyal troops.

I tried to be as delicate as possible when I asked him, 'Can I give you my opinion?' He said I could, so I said with as much persuasion in my voice as I could muster:

'Lay down the conditions for an honorable agreement and save the life of the men you have, which are the men who are most loyal to you. Don't sacrifice them, or sacrifice yourself.'

He answered emotionally: 'Every man is ready to die here.'

I immediately said back to him, 'I know, but I believe I can think about this more calmly than you can at the moment. Don't resign, demand honorable conditions for surrender, guarantees that you won't be the victim of a felony, because I think you should preserve yourself. Besides, you have a duty to the men with you. Don't sacrifice yourself!'

I was very conscious of the difference between [Salvador] Allende's circumstances on 11 September 1973 and Chávez's situation on 12 April 2002. Allende didn't have [the support of] a single soldier. Chávez had most of the soldiers and officers in the army [behind him], especially the younger ones.

'Don't resign! Don't resign!' I kept telling him.

We talked about other things: the way he should leave the country temporarily, get in touch with some officer with real authority among the ranks of the coup members, assure them of his willingness to leave the country but not to resign. From Cuba [I told him] we'd try to mobilise the diplomatic corps in our country and Venezuela; we'd send two planes with our foreign minister and a group of diplomats to pick him up. He thought about it for a few seconds, then finally agreed to my idea. It would all depend now on the enemy military leader.…

You were encouraging him to resist with weapon in hand?

No, quite the contrary. That was what Allende did—quite rightly so under the conditions he was facing—and he heroically paid for it with his life, as he'd promised.

Chávez had three solutions: barricade himself in Miraflores and resist to the death; leave the Palacio and try to meet with the people in order to trigger national resistance, which had virtually no possibility of success under those circumstances; or leave the country without resigning, in order to fight another day, which would have a real chance of rapid success. We suggested the third way.

My final words to convince him were, in essence: 'Save those brave men who are with you now in that unnecessary battle.' The idea came from my conviction that if a popular, charismatic leader such as Chávez, toppled in that deceitful way and under those circumstances, wasn't killed, then the people—in this case with the support of the best members of his armed forces—would demand his return, and that return would be inevitable.…

Did the Cubans at that point try to help Chávez in some way?

Well, at that moment we could only act by deploying the resources of diplomacy. In the middle of the night we called together all the accredited ambassadors in Havana and suggested that they accompany Felipe [Pérez Roque], our minister of foreign relations, to Caracas to peacefully rescue Chávez, the legitimate president of Venezuela—get him out alive.…

We proposed to send two planes to bring him back, should the coup leaders agree to his leaving the country. But the officer at the head of the coup rejected the formula.…

When I called again, two hours later, as he and I had agreed, Chávez had been taken prisoner by the officers of the coup and all contact with him had been lost. Television was broadcasting the news of his 'resignation' over and over again, in order to demoralize his supporters and the rest of the country.

Hours later—it was now broad daylight on 12 April—at one point arrangements were made for a telephone call, and Chávez spoke with his daughter María Gabriela. He told her that he hadn't resigned, that he was a 'prisoner-president'. He asked her to contact me so I could tell the world.… I immediately asked her, 'Are you willing to report this to the world in your own words?' [Castro arranges for Cuban television to broadcast this information and CNN Spanish transmits it throughout the hemisphere.]

'Every man is ready to die here.' —Chávez

'You have a duty to the men with you. Don't sacrifice yourself!' —Castro

And what consequences came of that?

Well, it was heard by millions of Venezuelans, mostly opposed to the coup, and by the soldiers loyal to Chávez, who were being brazenly lied to about the alleged resignation in order to confuse and paralyse them.…

I then spoke with Lucas Rincón [the inspector general of the Venezuelan military]. He told me that the Parachute Brigade, the Armed Division, and the F-16 base were all against the coup and ready to take action. I suggested that he do everything possible to find a solution without pitting soldier against soldier.…

Minutes later, María Gabriela called again; she told me that General Baduel, the head of the Parachute Brigade, needed to speak with me, and that the loyal forces in Maracay wanted to make a statement to the people of Venezuela and the world.…

'One moment,' he told me. 'I'm going to give the phone to Major General Julio García Montoya, permanent secretary of the National Council on Security and Defense'.… In essence, he said that the Venezuelan armed forces were loyal to the constitution. That said it all.…

The situation at that point was excellent. The coup that had begun on 11 April now had not the slightest chance of success. But a sword still hung by a thread over the country. Chávez's life was in the gravest danger.…

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In the desperation I felt as a friend and brother of the imprisoned president, a thousand ideas were running through my head…I was about to call [coup leader] General Vázquez Velasco himself. I'd never spoken with him, and I had no idea what sort of person he was. I didn't know whether he'd answer or not, and what he'd do if he did…I had second thoughts. At 4:15 that afternoon, I called our ambassador in Venezuela, Germán Sánchez….

'Call him,' I told Sánchez; 'tell him you're calling on my behalf, on my orders. Tell him I'm afraid there's going to be a river of blood in Venezuela if this goes on. Tell him there's just one man who can keep that from happening: Hugo Chávez. Urge him to free Chávez immediately, to forestall that very likely course of events.'

General Vázquez Velasco took the ambassador's call. He said he had Chávez in his power and that guaranteed his life, but that he couldn't agree to what we were asking. Our ambassador insisted—he argued, tried to persuade him. Finally the general got angry and hung up on him.

I immediately called María Gabriela and told her what Vázquez Velasco had said, especially his promise to guarantee Chávez's life. I asked her to put me in contact with Baduel again. At 4:49 [that afternoon], the call went through. I told him in detail about our ambassador's conversation with Vázquez Velasco, and I gave him my view of how important it was to make Vázquez Velasco aware of the gravity of the fact that he was holding Chávez. That fact made it possible to exert maximum pressure on him.

At that moment in Cuba, we didn't know for a certainty whether Chávez had actually been transferred or not, and if so, where. Hours earlier, there had been rumours that he'd been sent to the island of Orchila. When I spoke with Baduel, around 5:00 that afternoon, he was choosing the men and preparing the helicopters for a rescue. I could imagine how hard it was for Baduel and the paratroopers to obtain accurate details for such a delicate mission.

All the rest of that day, until midnight of the 13th, I spent all my time talking to anyone I could about the subject of Chávez's life. And I talked to a lot of people, because all that evening, the people, with the support of army officers and enlisted men, were controlling everything….

I even called Diosdado Cabello [who served as president for a few hours at the end of the coup attempt], as soon as he assumed the presidency. When our phone call was interrupted due to technical problems, I sent him a message through Héctor Navarro, the minister of higher education, to suggest that as president he should order Vázquez Velasco to free Chávez, reminding [Vázquez Velasco] of the seriousness of the consequences should he refuse to do so.

With almost everyone I spoke, I felt that I was a part of that drama that María Gabriela's phone call had involved me in on the morning of the 12th….

That's all I know; one day someone else will write the story in all its details. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

[Dec. 17] is that nowhere in the article does he mention imperialism. If we do not teach people that the war in Iraq is an imperialist war, then we will have failed as an antiwar movement. Like the Vietnam War and US invasions of Latin America, the Iraq War is all about imperialism—dominating regions of the world at the behest of business and military interests. To fail to teach this lesson is to invite the next imperialist invasion.

In addition Hayden doesn't call for teach-ins. Such teach-ins are being done by chapters of the new Students for a Democratic Society. Professors, especially in social sciences and humanities departments, have a special duty to educate their students about the nature of imperialism.

Finally, Hayden doesn't call for people to run for office on anti-imperialist platforms. If we won't do it, nobody will. It is an important way to get the message out that the Iraq War is imperialist, that US imperialism is why so many people in the world hate us and want to attack us, and that we must bring imperialism to an end.

Donald F. Busky
Former member, the old SDS

Riverside, Calif.

Tom Hayden's name on any peace movement's letterhead would cause it to be "Swiftboated" to death. Furthermore, Iraq is not Vietnam; opposition to the Iraq War has been fueled by the incompetence of the Bush Administration and the neoconservatives. A majority of Americans want our troops out of Iraq. You need bottom-up organizations, which may have different views, united behind getting the troops out. This means Ron Paul Republicans too. You might need a blog devoted to that single issue that ignores other partisan issues.

I am not going to vote for any candidate who supported the war or refused to cut off funding for it. I will cut any candidate off at the knees who will not bring the troops home from Iraq. We need to punish both parties over Iraq!

Pervis J. Casey

'The Best Man for the Job'

Ann Arbor, Mich.

Concerning Jon Wiener's "Judging Thomas" [Nov. 26]: I will never forgive those of my fellow African-Americans who facilitated the seating of Justice "Uncle Ruckus" Thomas. They fell for the "high-tech lynching" line, just as Thomas's handlers knew they would. And what has he done but make things worse for the less than well-heeled in this country? He learned the wrong lesson from his grandfather, and my children will be paying for this mistake for most of their lives.

Michael Whitehead

Los Angeles

If Jon Wiener's illuminating review of the Clarence Thomas books didn't scare the hell out of your readers, given the Justice's reactionary views on a range of issues, including separation of church and state, consider this: two years ago, I had the opportunity to debate church-state issues with John Eastman, a former law clerk for Justice Thomas. Eastman stunned everyone present by asserting (and reasserting when challenged) that the First Amendment does not prohibit the states from establishing official state religions.

Last June Eastman was appointed Dean of Chapman University School of Law in Orange, California.

Stephen F. Rohde

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Books & the Arts.

A Human Pledge

by SUSAN STEWART

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Robert Creeley in Buffalo, New York, 1982

The most important American love poet in living memory, and certainly one of the most important American poets *tout court*, Robert Creeley was born in 1926 and raised in eastern Massachusetts. His early life was marked by two devastating losses: the death of his father in 1930 and the removal of his left eye the year after, when he was 5. In 1944 Creeley left his studies at Harvard to drive an ambulance in Burma, and at war's end he returned to Cambridge. Then, in 1947, just before graduating, he dropped out, married Ann MacKinnon, tried raising chickens on a New Hampshire farm and eventually went to Mallorca, where he and MacKinnon started a small literary press. There he found the vocations of writing, traveling, editing and, eventually, teaching that he would follow the remainder of his rambling, rambunctious and often difficult life—a life that included two more marriages, raising children, the accidental death of a young daughter and periods of settling in New Mexico, Bolinas, Buffalo and Providence. Throughout these years, he journeyed around the world to read his poems and stories and pursued collaborations with a range of artists, from Jim Dine and Francesco Clemente to the legendary jazz soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy. Creeley died during a sojourn on a fellowship in Marfa, Texas, in March 2005.

Abridged from his last poems and the two volumes of *Collected Poems* published in 2006—the first extending from 1945 to 1975, the second from 1975 to 2005—this *Selected Poems* began as a project by Creeley and his former student Ben Friedlander and was finished by Friedlander after Creeley's unexpected death. Friedlander has updated the poet's earlier *Selected Poems* of 1991 by including more than thirty poems from four later books. Creeley famously wrote in his first *Collected Poems*, published in 1982, that he felt his poems were all of a piece and he would omit none of them so as not to "miss the factual life they had either made manifest or engendered." Readers new to Creeley, or simply those who want a more portable edition, will therefore welcome this new sampling.

Because Creeley was a friend of Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Jack Kerouac, he was often identified as being part of the Beat generation. Yet his main early poetic influences were, to put them in historical order, Emily Dickinson, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Hart Crane, Louis Zukofsky, Charles Olson and Robert Duncan—the last two forming his immediate company at Black Mountain College, where he taught in 1954 and 1955. Just as important is the fact that their influences were often some of his. Creeley's early poetry shows a Poundian affinity for the troubadours and poets of the *dolce stil nuovo*, but his love of what might be called an English American English—the New England speech patterns that were his native legacy—can clearly be heard in his echoes of Campion, Herrick and Anglo-American ballad and song traditions. The spareness of Creeley's poems is Puritan as much as '70s Minimalist, and perhaps only a Puritan could celebrate the body and its ambivalent desires quite as well as he does. His well-known mantra "Form is never more than an extension of content," which he honed in his extensive early correspondence with Olson on issues of form and line, can be viewed not only as the outcome of a Modernist rebellion against Victorian meters and narrative structures but also as a late-twentieth-century version of the concept of organic form, which reaches from German Romanticism to Coleridge's lectures on Shakespeare to the New Criticism of the 1950s.

Often on the margins of social life, Creeley was at the exact center of a poetic tradition that stretched from the twelfth century to the present. But unlike other twentieth-century poets who wore their learning heavily, Creeley had a touch as light as a song, a touch that could only come from internalizing the whole tradition and letting it come naturally to him. Here is a proclamation from his early poem "Heroes":

> In all those stories the hero
> is beyond himself into the next
> thing, be it those labors
> of Hercules, or Aeneas going into
> death.

Selected Poems, 1945–2005
By Robert Creeley.
Edited by Benjamin Friedlander.
California. 338 pp. $21.95.

Susan Stewart's Columbarium *won the National Book Critics Circle Award in poetry in 2003.*

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I thought the instant of the one
humanness
in Virgil's plan of it
was that it was of course human
enough to die,
yet to come back, as he said, *hoc opus, hic labor est.*

That was the Cumaean Sibyl
speaking.
This is Robert Creeley, and Virgil
is dead now two thousand years, yet
Hercules
and the Aeneid, yet all that
industrious wis-

dom lives in the way the mountains
and the desert are waiting
for the heroes, and death also
can still propose the old labors.

Or we could turn to "First Rain," from his 1983 book *Mirrors*. There are few poems that revise the metaphysical tradition, the eighteenth-century descriptive poem and the romantic notion of "emotion recollected in tranquility" as elegantly as this one:

These retroactive small
instances of feeling

reach out for a common
ground in the wet

first rain of a faded
winter. Along the grey

iced sidewalk revealed
piles of dogshit, papers,

bits of old clothing, are
the human pledges,

call them, "We are here and
have been all the time." I

walk quickly. The wind
drives the rain, drenching

my coat, pants, blurs
my glasses, as I pass.

"Feeling" that might "reach out for a common/ground." This is an exact description of the lyric task, and Creeley's accounts are always exacting, his "retroactive small/instances" setting the scale of attention from the very start. At the poem's outset, and later with "common," "wet," "faded" and "grey," Creeley ends lines on simple, otherwise infrequent, adjectives, noting the quality of something, its appearance, before announcing its essence. Every line break is a small adjustment of perception—or perhaps one that is not so small: the pieces of debris along the sidewalk are "human pledges" at first mention, but then we learn we should "call them" that; the work of the poem will be to make this calling a common ground. These are not only free-verse enjambments but also ways of making the temporal sequence of lines count as transformations. In the line "drives the rain, drenching," "drenching" serves as a predicate adjective or simply an intransitive verb, but by the next line and stanza, "drenching" acquires its two objects, "coat" and "pants," and seems to be finished until the new verb, "blurs," finds its object—paradoxically the instrument of seeing, "my glasses."

Indeed, the whole poem relies on two antithetical words at line endings: first "revealed," which is not located syntactically until we see it modifies the verb "are," and then "blurs," which seems to perform its action in one direction while the speaker disappears behind its screen. The relation between things revealed and things blurred becomes an exact description of the experience of a "first rain," a rain renewed by a promised return of winter and what we call another kind of promise—the human pledge.

Twenty years earlier Creeley had written another lyric on rain, simply called "The Rain," first published in these pages in 1959 and then in his 1962 book *For Love*. In that poem, rain also persistently recalls the speaker to himself: "What am I to myself/that must be remembered,/insisted upon/so often?" But then, strikingly, he turns to address his lover directly:

Love, if you love me,
lie next to me.
Be for me, like rain,
the getting out

of the tiredness, the fatuousness, the
semi-
lust of intentional indifference.
Be wet
with a decent happiness.

From the poem's beginning, Creeley already is trying out a play of words at line endings as he also works through brilliant transformations of diction. Nothing so simple as the pun on "Be wet" here, and nothing so ironically complex as "the semi-/lust of intentional indifference," a phrase that could have been lifted from Henry James. *For Love* created a sensation when it appeared, and the pleasure and intensity offered by its poems still holds: indeed, many critics continue to subscribe to a legend that views this book as paramount, with the rest of Creeley's career amounting to a falling off.

The Collected Poems and this new *Selected* should challenge that view. The poems show a consistent set of themes and concerns as well as a range of changes in form, yet all the while there is one life and one voice joining the whole. Nearly all of Creeley's poems take place in the here and now, and his basic form, though there are important variations, is a string of quatrains as square and carefully joined as a piece of Shaker carpentry. There are no dramatic monologues, no elaborately constructed fictions. The metaphors come from everyday experience and therefore sometimes seem all the more surreal: his infamous lines in "The Warning"—"For love—I would/split open your head and put/a candle in/behind the eyes"—modulates its own threat, self-consciously insisting on the value of symbolic exchange: "Love is dead in us/if we forget/the virtues of an amulet/and quick surprise."

Creeley's control over enjambment between lines and across stanzas often made for just such a poetry of quick surprise. Some of this derives from observations that are mundane and startling at once: a memory of spilling mustard on himself at a baseball game; a picture of a young man buying sanitary napkins, "Modess," for his lover; a woman who pees in a sink after making love. At other times, it's the imagery of the poem's language, as in "Morning," a three-line description of what sounds to me like a hangover:

Dam's broke,
head's a
waterfall.

The line breaks, word count, syllable count and stresses do a monumental amount of work in a minimal amount of space as they jam, fall and fuse.

In his conversation, and in many of his poems, Creeley had a habit of moving between the first-person "I" and the impersonal "one." A 1986 poem, "Massachusetts May," for instance, starts out "Month one was born in" and a few lines later shifts to the particular "sweet May of my boyhood." A number of the powerful short lyrics, written near the end of his life and published in his posthumous collection *On Earth* (2006), also rely on this contrast. Here's the title poem:

One's here
and there is still elsewhere
along some road to hell
where all is well—

or heaven
even

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where all the saints still wait
and guard the golden gate.

That's all it takes for Creeley to write a "road not taken" poem—the extraordinary amount of resonance between *here* and *there*, between *still*, *hell*, *all*, *well*, *all* and *still*, between *heaven* and *even*, and between *guard*, *golden* and *gate* is both omnipresent and barely there, a visible and invisible architecture of letters and sounds. It is no disparagement of the work to consider to what extent the loss of an eye made Creeley a particular, even unique, poet—one who had to turn his head to scan the whole view, and so one for whom perception was always exaggeratedly temporal; one who could apprehend at once clarity and occlusion, and who was particularly aware of the sources and resonances of sound. His "one" was both universal and the unique quality of his I/eye.

Nevertheless, Creeley's speakers, and Creeley speaking, are almost always talking to a specific "you," a you often addressed by his or her proper name. There are poems like "The Rain" that involve an intimate and plaintive address to a lover, and there are many others that are in the genre of the lover's complaint—addressed to a third party, reader or voyeur:

My old lady is a goof at heart,
she tells me she loves me, we'll never
part—

but what a goofed up chick will tell
to a man
is best written in wind εt water εt
sand.

These lines are from "Stomping with Catullus," and the use of typographical and diacritical marks and abbreviations throughout the early poems, constantly setting up a tension between the spoken aspect of language and its notation, is a practice borrowed from Pound and Zukofsky especially. Creeley never drops it—if anything he becomes more and more conscious of the subtle orchestration that punctuation, abbreviations, italics and other features of printing can give to the poem on the page.

At times, as in many of the erotic poems for his second wife, Bobbie Hawkins, Creeley's immediacy makes the language flatten to a form of "filler": "He/loves, his mind/is occupied, his//hands move/writing words/which come/into his head." But then "The Act of Love," from *A Day Book* (1972), like so many of his poems, begins to develop as a mind revising itself, questioning its desires and its relation to physical desire, until the speaker reaches the final paradoxical insight: "all these/senses do/commingle, so/that in your very/arms I still/can think of you." The poems of this period, from the onset of the 1960s into the mid-'70s, are remarkable for their depictions of erotic rage, anger, tension, shot nerves and suffering.

You did it,
and didn't want to,

and it was simple.
You were not involved,

even if your head was cut off,
or each finger

twisted
from its shape until it broke,

and you screamed too
with the other, in pleasure.

Even so, Creeley constantly shifts his tone. His often anthologized "Ballad of the Despairing Husband" is both comic and whatever is the opposite of self-congratulatory. Said husband's wife proclaims:

And I will wear what dresses I
choose!
And I will dance, and what's to lose!
I'm free of you, you little prick,
and I'm the one to make it stick.

Some of the most complex and developed poems here are reflections and elegies dedicated to women relatives: his grandmother ("The Teachings"); his mother ("For My Mother: Genevieve Jules Creeley April 8, 1887–October 7,1972"; "Mother's Voice"); his Aunt Berenice ("I Love You"); the family housekeeper of his childhood ("Theresa's Friends"); his infant daughter Hannah ("H's"); his sister Helen ("Emptiness"). This last poem is an elegy assembled

Two Poems For *The Nation*

1.
Pieces of the past arising out of the rubble. Which evokes Eliot and then
evokes Suspicion. Ghosts all of them. Doers of no good.
The past around us is deeper than.
Present events defy us, the past
Has no such scruples. No funeral processions for him. He died in agony.
The cock under the thumb.
Rest us as corpses
We poets
Vain words.
For a funeral (as I live and breathe and speak)
Of good
And impossible
Dimensions.

2.
These big trucks drive and in each one
There is a captain of poetry or a captain of love or a captain of sex.
A company
In which there is no vice-president.
You see them first as a kid when you're hitch-hiking and they were not
as big or as final. They sometimes stopped for a hitch-hiker although
you had to run.
Now they move down the freeway in some mocking kind of order. The
First truck is going to be passed by the seventh. The distance
Between where they are going and where you are standing cannot be
measured.
The road-captains, heartless and fast-moving
Know

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from images of an empty field with a barn in it—his sister's barn, then an account of his sister's possessions filling the barn, and then an account of her loss of such worldly goods, until describing the final loss of her person. It all happens swiftly, relentlessly, one line laid down after another, each full of emotion and yet truly emptied of mere sentiment. A late poem, "Pictures," for Penelope Highton, to whom Creeley was married for the last three decades of his life, is both a declaration of love and a kind of *ubi sunt* meditation that resolves to continue to hear, see and tell "all that lives in a forest,/all that surrounds me."

Like the Renaissance coterie poets, Creeley constantly created small spaces of resonant silences and sounds, his stanzas working as "little rooms." A meditation on a kitchen, from 1974, is a good example:

> The light in the morning
> comes in the front windows,
> leaving a lace-like pattern
> on the table and floor.
>
> •
>
> In the silence now
> of this high square room
> the clock's tick adjacent
> seems to mark old time.
>
> •
>
> Perpetually sweeping
> this room, I want it
> to be like it was.

Made up for the most part of five-word lines—isoverbalism (using a set number of words per line) was a technique Creeley often preferred—"Kitchen" also is built out of monosyllabic words. These come up against a second pattern of disyllabic and trisyllabic terms: *morning*, *windows*, *leaving*, *pattern*, *silence*, *adjacent*, *perpetually*, *sweeping*. The light literally "leaves" its leafy pattern in the room, marking out negative and positive space; the "now" of silence is broken by the ticking of a clock that ticks "old time," marking the present via the past; the I/eye that, like a lighthouse beam, sweeps the kitchen, has its own imprint, a perpetual, paradoxical and impossible desire for a specific moment to be restored.

"Caves," a beautiful late poem, begins:

> So much of my childhood seems
> to have been spent in rooms—
> at least in memory, the shades
>
> pulled down to make it darker, the
> shaft of sunlight at the window's
> edge.
> I could hear the bees then
> gathering

Creeley goes on to describe a country childhood of digging or finding caves, building little shacks out of trees and making teepeelike enclosures. All these forms of makeshift shelter from childhood lead, like the stanzas of a poem, and via the stanzas of the poem, to memories of playing as a child, to travel in the confined space of airplanes, and then to reflections on caves as places where the sound is before us and the "arched dark space" becomes a place of discovery. The whole poem rewrites the idealizing Platonic metaphor of the cave to replace it positively with a lived material experience of making and discovery.

Reading through Creeley's work reveals how much he was a domestic poet, but maybe it's more exact to notice a dynamic, which seems typical of the 1950s and '60s Beat culture in which his poetic sensibility was forged, between enclosure and escape. As he asks in one of his last poems, "En Famille," "what made one feel such desperation/to get away, get far from home, be gone from those/would know us even if they only saw our noses or our toes"? Fried-

Now it is the turn of water, the very foundation
of life, to teach us to be good animals.
- Jacques Leslie

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lander notes that Creeley's 1978 book *Hello* is the record of a trip through eight countries in nine weeks, and that a decade later, during a sabbatical in Helsinki, Creeley traveled on reading tours to Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Poland, Russia, Latvia, Sweden and several other countries, returning frequently to read in the United States as well.

Dante's verses took for granted a practical knowledge of falconry; Sidney's a practical knowledge of dressage. Creeley's work, in turn, involves a fundamental experience of modernity—more often than not, someone else is driving the machine in which we're riding. He is the poet laureate of the back seat, that place of erotic encounter and unacknowledged legislation. To travel backward, from the late "Pictures": "Like sitting in back seat,/can't see what street/we're on or what the/one driving sees//or where we're going"; from "Some Afternoon": "Why not ride/with pleasure/and take oneself/as measure…the house, the road,/all go forward/ in a huge/flash"; from "A Wicker Basket": "And she opens the door of her cadillac,/I step in back,/and we're gone. She turns me on"; and, most famously, from his often-anthologized "I Know a Man":

> As I sd to my
> friend, because I am
> always talking,—John, I
>
> sd, which was not his
> name, the darkness sur-
> rounds us, what
>
> can we do against
> it, or else, shall we ɛt
> why not, buy a goddamn big car,
>
> drive, he sd, for
> christ's sake, look
> out where yr going.

In Creeley's final poems, he knew well where he was going both as a poet and as a mortal being, cognizant of old age and the body's failings but still loving and changing his work. Friedlander includes a selection that takes the reader in surprising new directions, including a luxurious homage to Wallace Stevens from the late 1990s, "Histoire de Florida." Creeley left many apostles; perhaps some of them will turn now to the tasks of fully editing and annotating his collected works in poetry and prose and producing a solid scholarly biography. Others will no doubt end up fighting over his legacy before sorting it all out. In the meantime, this *Selected* should continue to draw new readers to lines as remarkable as these, like a rough-hewn work song, from his 2003 "Supper": "Shovel it in./Then go away again./ Then come back and/shovel it in.… I can no longer think of heaven/as any place I want to go,/not even dying. I want/to shovel it in.//I want to keep on eating,/drinking, thinking./I am ahead. I am not dead./ Shovel it in." ■

Fly Papers

by LORNA SCOTT FOX

In October and November, half of France went on strike over a raft of government reforms concerning the judicial system, the public funding of university education and the public pension system for railway workers. A combative spirit of protest survives in France, despite the disarray of the Socialists and other parties on the left. Contemporary letters might thus be expected to reflect the ongoing struggle for the national soul between the powers of the state and those of the market, but paralysis has set in: the conformity and escapism of even elite fiction are signs of a new status quo already quietly in place. The so-called *pensée unique* (a home-grown Washington Consensus) prevails in all the centers of power, ring-fenced by the close—often literally matrimonial—alliance between the handful of individuals and companies that dominate business, media and politics; the vast publishing conglomerate Hachette is owned by Lagardère, which also owns an arms company. Most successful writers toe the line.

The shortlist for the 2007 Prix Goncourt, France's most prestigious literary prize for prose, reflects popular topics for the upper tiers of the French mass market. With the exception of one novel set in the real asylum seeker's camp of Sangatte, these topics can be summed up as horror, heroism and history. This year's winner? Gilles Leroy with *Alabama Song*, a novel about Zelda and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Besides confirming that traditional anti-Americanism is no longer cool under President Sarkozy, this selection suggests that France's literary tastemakers know their public: confused about national identity and stuck at an ideological crossroads, people prefer to read something that distracts them from the here and now.

Distraction of a different sort is a key motif in Lydie Salvayre's *The Power of Flies*, one of a dozen short, peculiar texts that have earned this novelist, who is also a practicing psychiatrist, more nervous respect than love in France. (*The Power of Flies* is the sixth novel of Salvayre's to be translated into English.) Her paranoid loners—festering in their housing projects or mean provincial towns, harassed by officials and do-gooders—reproduce contemporary power relations within a vicious personal-institutional loop. But any kinship with European pessimists like Michel Houellebecq or Elfriede Jelinek (who, like Salvayre, analyze the debasement of contemporary sexuality) is theoretical. It's the fabric and flavor of the text that define an *oeuvre* as well as Salvayre's plays for laughs in the voices of faux-innocent misfits who have swallowed the thesaurus. Salvayre uses "characters" as cartoon masks behind which she utters the cruelty and comedy of life under the new capitalist order. Her latest novel, which was evicted from the Prix Goncourt at the second stage of elimination, is called—suicidally if she wanted to win— *Portrait de l'écrivain en animal domestique* (Portrait of the Writer as a Household Pet). It traces the corruption of a worthy liberal author by a sham-philanthropic fast-food tycoon, who hires her to perfect his image for posterity: a satirical fable, like all her works, powered by the spirit of Swift and Rabelais.

Salvayre's "voice," an elaborate blend of the mellifluous and the rude, and the importance of orality in her writing, are an effect of her unusual background. Born near Toulouse in 1948, she is the daughter of Spanish Republican refugees, and her first language was Spanish. To be foreign and poor meant hu-

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DALKEY ARCHIVE PRESS

Lydie Salvayre

The Power of Flies
By Lydie Salvayre.
Translated by Jane Kuntz.
Dalkey Archive Press. 186 pp. $12.95.

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miliation at school, and she revisits this in her fiction; her childhood was a primal experience of social voicelessness. Although she began compensating for that from the moment she discovered French language, literature and philosophy, she is intimately concerned with the inarticulate anger of the class she escaped from—for she knows what it is to be denied a voice—and engages with this both clinically and creatively. She works with young Parisian marginals as a psychiatrist; and she published her first novel, tellingly titled *La Déclaration* (The Declaration), in 1990. By then, the dichotomy between Spanish and French had come to symbolize fundamental oppositions between transgression and propriety, passion and order, body and mind. As Salvayre explained to Yann Nicol in *The Brooklyn Rail* in 2006, for her Spanish was originally

> the language of intimacy, of interior riposte, the language that handled everything left out by the beautiful exterior tongue: bad taste, crude jokes, what didn't legally exist, excesses and overflows. So I used Spanish for what was improper, risible, ugly, or even monstrous. At the same time, I was learning French: the refined language of school, the very language of books.... French meant beauty of expression and decorum.

All of Salvayre's narrators (speakers, ranters, even when they're ostensibly writing) delight in combining the mock-literary and the demotic. Sometimes it's vaguely justified by giving to the characters, straitened or downtrodden as they may be, a subversive love of the classics: in *La Compagnie des Spectres* (The Company of Ghosts), published in 1997, the bathtub of a mother and daughter who have been driven mad by the legacy of the Occupation is clogged with volumes of Seneca, Epictetus and Cicero. There's less reason for the arch eloquence of the narrator of *The Power of Flies*, who has only read thrillers and the *Pensées* of Blaise Pascal. What Salvayre does is to project her own outsiderhood, with its playful, mannered distance from the language, onto a series of alter egos whose rhetorical range is a device for parodying the incompatible discourses of which people are made.

The Power of Flies, published in 1995, is Salvayre's fourth novel. The unnamed speaker is in jail for murdering his father. He pours out his life and opinions to a judge, a defense lawyer, a psychiatrist and a nurse—though one shouldn't conclude anything about the French justice system from the authorities' solicitous interest in the background to such a clear-cut crime. (The reader must wait until

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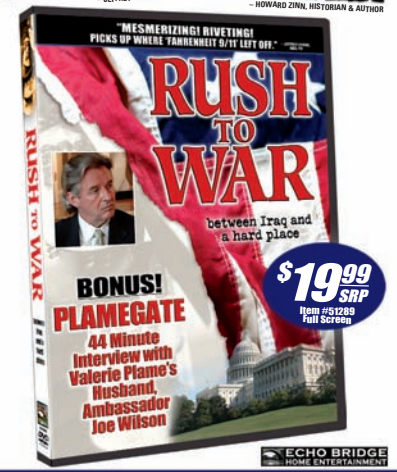
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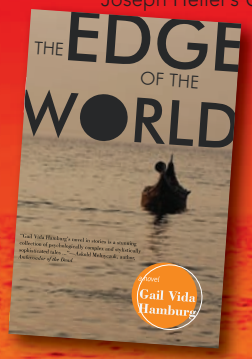

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the last page to know who was killed, but it's no surprise.) The framework is so sketchy that any interlocutors may exist purely in the imagination of a man reliving his descent into madness. We deduce their input from his reactions: "You need some evidence? Significant factors from my childhood?"

There shall be no shortage of childhood horrors, chopped in with the more recent past, as different times slowly merge into a manic present. We start with scenes from the speaker's job as a museum guide at Port-Royal-des-Champs (the Jansenist convent and school where Pascal often stayed, as a celebrity defender of the cause, even after it was declared heretical in 1654). The speaker's persona is at once apparent: a fantastical, pompous little man, a nonentity who revels in what small power he has over others. He enjoys scaring the tourists with horrid warnings lifted from Pascal: "Human bonding, I tell them, is as fatal as it is futile. For no one can influence the orbit of another. Each of us plots his path irreversibly, awaiting the day of the final catastrophe (you should see their faces!)" This segues into a melodramatic vision of his dead mother with a fly on her cheek and the terrifying countenance of his father—her moral torturer, "her killer"—before switching jauntily to his own marital life, via fresh liberties with Pascal:

> Whosoever ties love down delivers its death warrant. This is what I keep telling my wife, Your Honor.... If I cannot always come up with the suitably pithy turn of phrase required for a rational demonstration, I do prove an excellent pedagogue when it comes to empirical argument. Thus, every day, I work at educating my wife. I prod her. I sting her. I attack her. I vex her. I overwhelm her with sarcasm and nastiness. My purpose is that she rid herself of me entirely. And I confess, though this may shock you, that I enjoy tormenting her this way.

If the intimacy of any first-person voice courts empathy from the reader, this narrator—full of self-pity when recalling the father's aggressions, full of smugness when reporting his own—is very difficult to like. Salvayre's challenge to us, however unclear in this early book, is to feel compassion where the character shows none: to understand him as the heir to a violence that is historically founded and socially perpetuated. The speaker's parents, like Salvayre's, were impoverished Spanish refugees. When the father breaks down at the news of Stalin's death, his tears make this sadist even more repellent; but they are nevertheless a hint of the wound behind the rage inherited by the son.

Salvayre's own father was apparently brutal and paranoid. Forgiveness was only spelled out by her in 2005, in *La Méthode Mila* (Mila's Method), through an unusually positive character in this fiction, a Spanish healer with a heart. Mila enables the narrator, Fausto, to think of his late despised father "returning exhausted from the building site and possessed by a relentless violence that was nothing other than a definitive despair, I understood this too late": the despair of political defeat, followed by exile to join the French underclass. There are no Spanish parents in *The Company of Ghosts*, but there's a similar transmission and displacement of historical violence. Here the fascism of Vichy France persists into the present day, according to the "hallucinations" of three generations of raving women who are, it is implied, sane, since society is mad. Salvayre's thesis of the transmutation, via the family, of political into personal violence, can be seen as a new try for the elusive equation that's distracted the left for generations: a working articulation of psychoanalysis and politics.

The reproduction of oppressive or inauthentic behavior in Salvayre's fiction is not just confined to a domestic hell. She is at her funniest when caricaturing the language and hangups of petty despots and their victims. Her renderings of City Hall meetings, pedagogical lectures and factory award ceremonies are grand riffs on demagoguery and inadvertent self-revelation. In *The Power of Flies* the museum guide's boss, Monsieur Molinier, is targeted for his cultural pretensions. So long as his superiority remains unchallenged, he is affable and paternal, instructing his staff in the lore of the genius he calls "Blaise"; he fawns over important visitors and goes to pieces before any "genuine artist," "like he's trying to keep from farting." Our narrator has a contradictory relationship to his boss, ingenuous and cruelly knowing by turns. He mocks the efforts Molinier had to make to overcome social origins as lowly as his own; he is flattered by his good will yet perceives its condescension; he affects to be puzzled by Molinier's resentment when, as a guest in his house, he outdoes Molinier in Pascalian erudition. He also outdoes Molinier in feats of hollow pedantry and patronization of others, and could be describing himself when he calls his superior "just a poor jerk. A loser.... A skeletal fellow, whose flesh has

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melted away, leaving his bones and his soul." Both are wage slaves of the culture industry who try to give their lives a higher meaning through familiarity with the great philosopher.

Much comic pathos is wrung from this, as the narrator's soaring intimations of "vastness" and "the burden of all that is unknowable" collide with reality: "Will I be able to withstand such metaphysics? I asked myself upon seeing my wife rush in, slippers slapping." He appreciates Pascal's reprimands to human pride and vanity, inasmuch as they give words to his bitterness, but is apt to misapply them. Made uncomfortable, for he prefers wanking off to intercourse, by the lewdness of a regular in a bar—bars are always the stage for tabloid sexism and racism in Salvayre's work—he steels himself to remain "fortified as I am by my reading of Pascal, who enjoins men to look their shared wretchedness in the face." This rather misses the point of Pascal's logic, which is, even in the absence of God's saving grace, the necessity of charity toward others.

Locked in a hatred that's conveyed as a form of grandeur or purity, as well as a curse, the narrator sinks into catatonia for long enough to get rid of his wife, then becomes a tramp in Paris, where the paradoxes of charity intensify. He is hurt at being rejected by various petty materialists for his raggedness and wild talk of gaining "a foothold in the void," and yet displays no sympathy for fellow rejects: "I go sit on a bench, next to a woman. She's blond, she's ugly, she's pale and puffy, with a persistent odour emanating from her body.... I get up."

The *pensée* of Pascal's to which the novel's title alludes is "The power of flies; they win battles, hinder our souls from acting, consume our bodies." For the haunted narrator they represent decay and death; hatred, too, has "the dull mindlessness of flies." But in Pascal flies are principally symbols of distraction, small annoyances that can paralyze us, cutting our illusion of free will down to size. His great theme of *divertissement* (translated here as "entertainment" when the right term is "diversion," at once amusement and deflection) is a license for the narrator to crucify the superficiality of others, especially dumb tourists. To find these vignettes amusing one has to remember it's really Salvayre talking, through an often flimsy, inconsistent mask. Chapter Nine, however, consists of a single pivotal sentence for the "character": "Should the reading of Pascal be considered a form of [diversion], Monsieur Jean?" This promising intuition is quickly forgotten. Morbid philosophizing fuels his isolation and precipitates the crisis; but killing the father brings neither relief nor liberation, to judge by these confused confessions.

For all its verbal antics and moments of grotesque or absurdist humor, *The Power of Flies* offers a despairing view of the psychological damage an alienated society inflicts upon the individual and of the consolations of philosophy. More sentimental and potentially more consoling, *La Méthode Mila* engages yet more directly with a classic thinker, this time Descartes—the cold fish who made mechanistic abstraction respectable. The Cartesian "method," which involves training oneself to replace unpleasant thoughts with pleasant ones, not unlike cognitive behavior therapy, is refuted by the narrator in a scolding address to the man himself.

Fausto tells Descartes that after he retired from the rat race to divide his time between philosophy and porn, his decrepit old mother moved in and ruined everything. It soon became apparent that no amount of febrile "cogitation" was of the slightest use against the sadomasochistic dynamic that developed between them, a version of the indignities played out in *The Company of Ghosts* between mothers and daughters, and in *The Power of Flies* between husbands and wives. Only by falling for Mila (a politically aware, emotionally wise Spanish "seer" with a gift for stories) has Fausto become free to actively love his mother, forgive his late father and embrace the dark, chaotic, grubby truth of humanity of which there's no inkling in Descartes. All around us, however, Cartesianism has triumphed as the "positive Reason reigning over our earth that is ploughed by freeways, surrounded by satellites, sold off to technoscience." Descartes's "mathematization of the universe" was a disastrous con that has led to the wholesale quantification of contemporary life: the neurosis of neoliberalism.

One could argue that Salvayre is not so much a novelist as a prophet in the desert wielding a facetious literary megaphone, and that her synthetic plots, confessional characters and savory or archaic speech rhythms make her works more like monologues that demand to be performed aloud. Stylized situations and orally driven ironies suit the theater, and it seems right that several of her books have been adapted in this way. A version of *Les Belles âmes* (Beautiful Souls), about a politically correct package tour of slums and war zones, opens in Paris this month. Whether on the page or on the stage, Salvayre's voice—seldom has the term been less of a metaphor—is an original work of artifice, an alternative to realist kitsch, a protest in itself. ■

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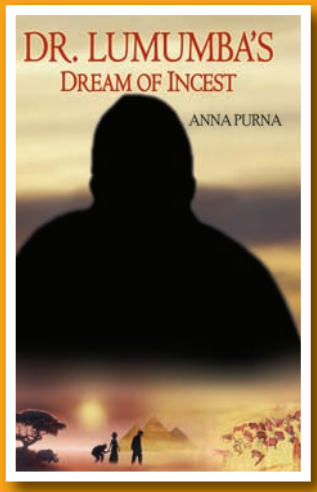

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The Dot Matrix

by LAILA LALAMI

I`jaam
An Iraqi Rhapsody.
By Sinan Antoon.
City Lights. 97 pp. $11.95.

Legend has it that in the eleventh century, when the very eccentric and possibly demented Caliph El Hakim needed some money, he wrote a letter to the governor of Jerusalem asking that a tax be levied. The governor wrote back that this was impossible—most of the people were poor, many of them monks who lived in caves in Wad er-Rabâbeh. El Hakim asked his scribe to write a letter with the command "Count the men." Whether the scribe made a mistake or whether the letter was intercepted, no one really knows. But by the time the letter arrived in Jerusalem it read "Castrate the men." In Arabic, the difference between the two verbs *hasaa* and *khasaa* is a single dot.

The history of the Arabic language is full of such tales, in which a dot can change the meaning of a word entirely. In fact, the original Arabic alphabet consisted of consonant letters only, some of which corresponded to multiple sounds. For example, the letter *ha* could be interpreted as the sounds *ha*, *kha* or *ja*. The ambiguity was resolved through semantic context. It was not until the seventh century that diacritical marks were added to consonants, creating a simple one-to-one association between letters and sounds. A dot over the *ha* turned it into the sound *kha*; a dot under, and it became *ja*; no dot, and it remained *ha*. This process was known as *I`jaam*, which can be translated as "providing diacritical marks" or, more simply, "dotting." The term has its origin in the root *`-j-m*, which also means, among other things, "foreign," "barbarian" and "obscure." Thus, the word *I`jaam* can be used to refer to the clarification of a term but also to its obscurity.

In his slim but powerful book *I`jaam: An Iraqi Rhapsody*, the novelist Sinan Antoon takes advantage of the orthographic ambiguities of Arabic to explore themes of love, loss, identity and resistance in the face of political oppression. Born in 1967 to an Iraqi father and an American mother, Antoon came of age under Saddam's despotic rule. He studied English literature at Baghdad University but left Iraq in 1991 and moved to the United States, where he completed a doctoral degree in Arabic literature. He is a poet, a novelist, a scholar and a translator. (His translation, with Munir Akash, Carolyn Forché and Amira El-Zein, of Mahmoud Darwish's *Unfortunately, It Was Paradise*, was a finalist for the 2004 PEN Literary Award for Poetry in Translation.) He has also co-directed and co-produced a documentary film, *About Baghdad*, about Iraq after the fall of Saddam and at the start of the American invasion.

To enter Antoon's novel is to enter the surreal world of Saddam-era Iraq, where it is not advisable to throw newspapers in the trash because their front pages carry photos of the Great Leader, where kindergarten teachers write reports denouncing the jokes children make in school, where students are forced to leave class and attend huge rallies and where young men are found "unfit for military service" rather than "exempt" from it. But *I`jaam* also lets us enter the intimate world of a regular citizen in 1980s Iraq, a man who resists the regime in myriad ways: he uses a newspaper with the photo of Saddam as toilet paper, he turns Baathist mottos into jokes, he votes for Mickey Mouse in the student union elections and he uses a benign tumor as an excuse not to join the army.

`jaam is presented to us as a manuscript found in 1989 in a file cabinet of the directorate of general security in Baghdad. An introductory page informs us that the manuscript was handwritten with no diacritical marks anywhere on it, which made the task of reading it very difficult. Nevertheless, a state employee named Talal Ahmad is charged with typing the text, and adding diacritical marks and punctuation, but Ahmad chooses to preserve the ambiguities suggested by the absence of dots. For instance, when we encounter the expression "Ministry of Rupture and Inflammation," a footnote alerts us that the words can also be dotted to mean "Ministry of Culture and Information." Ahmad's hope is that by exposing the "profanity used by the writer to deride the sayings of our Father Leader," the Baathist Party's "values and achievements,"

Laila Lalami, the author of Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits, *is an assistant professor of creative writing at the University of California, Riverside.*

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and the war against the "tyrannical enemy," he will help identify the manuscript's author and "anyone who facilitated this disgraceful transgression."

I'jaam turns out to be something of a memoir. Its author is the single-named Furat, a young student of English literature at Baghdad University. One afternoon, as he is sitting on a campus bench, he is picked up by the redoubtable Mukhabarat services and taken to al-Waziriyya, where he is interrogated and brutally tortured. The narrative thread then shifts between past and present, allowing us to learn more about Furat at the same time as we are trying to find out why he has been kidnapped by the state. Having lost both his parents in a car accident, Furat lives with his grandmother, a devoutly religious woman who lights candles "in church after church for [his] safety." He writes poetry but has a hard time getting published in newspapers like *Jumhuriyya*, which devote their literary pages to panegyrics for Saddam and find Furat's work useless. Furat's girlfriend, the beautiful and witty Areej, shares this love of poetry, but she too cautions him against making his hatred for the regime so apparent. For his senior thesis, he wants to write a paper on Orwell's *1984*, but the book is banned from the university library. The department chair suggests a different novel, but his thesis adviser rejects the topic altogether: "Who is this Orwell? Never heard of him." The adviser, it turns out, has gotten his position because he spied for the Baath Party. In the car that takes Furat to prison, he recalls the improvisational singer Nazim Al-Ghazali: "Those who threw me/ those that tortured me/on a distant bridge have left me."

Like K. in *The Trial*, Furat never learns the exact charges against him, but we quickly suspect that they have something to do with his writing, his poetry—his use of words. The Mukhabarat officers who pick up Furat tell him they want to hear more of his "ideas" and his "famous sense of humor." After weeks of torture, he finally gets an audience with an interrogator, who professes to be "a great admirer of poetry," though he does not like Furat's prose poems, which he calls "pure nonsense." A change in poetic form is thus considered suspicious and a dangerous "foreign" fad. As Furat is led out and back to his cell, the interrogator speaks words familiar to every oppressor throughout history: "It's no use. You'll never be civilized."

The Baathist state does not tolerate ambivalence of feelings on the part of its citizens, nor does it look kindly upon any ambiguity in their use of language. After all, any ambiguity requires room for interpretation, and such freedom is not allowed. "Forbidden" the narrator informs us, "was the most often-used word in the country." In a nightmare triggered by the torture he has endured, Furat is told that the Great Leader has ordered all lexicons and dictionaries burned and that the government will soon distribute lists of allowable meanings to the people. In this black-and-white world, Furat's decision to write a manuscript without dots, full of ambiguity, is his way of resisting the regime. Yet the depth and range of that resistance remains muted, if not ambiguous, since Furat's manuscript has already been "dotted" by a state employee, and although some of the puns have been kept, the reader cannot help but wonder whether the original text contained even more ambiguities that were

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excised from the manuscript she is reading.

I'jaam was translated into English by Antoon himself, in collaboration with Rebecca Johnson. This was no doubt a formidable task for a novel that plays on the orthographic aspect of the Arabic language in order to increase ambiguity. The text is rendered idiomatically throughout, with only a handful of missteps. (Sentences such as "my heart began to applaud in ecstasy," which may sound fine in Arabic, could have used a bit more inspiration in their English rendering.) There is also the challenge of translating a text where the dialogue is in Iraqi Arabic, while the narrative is in standard literary Arabic. Antoon and Johnson acquit themselves of this task admirably.

Structurally, too, this novel is a gem, with brief sections that shift in space and time, taking us through Furat's relationship with his grandmother, his love affair with Areej, his trials and tribulations on campus. In addition, the dislocations in the text mirror the confusion that Furat experiences, as he loses track of time in prison. The narrative also includes chilling, nightmarish sequences that further enhance his sense of confusion. In one such sequence, Iraqi citizens are asked to donate their eyes for the war effort against Iran; Furat sees lines forming at a middle school, now an organ collection center, where military officers take note of people's eye color. A state that literally takes away the eyes of its citizens, Antoon suggests, requires one to bear witness through any medium available. An undotted text calls upon us to exercise our freedom in interpreting it and to discover its hidden meanings. The nightmares that Furat shares are not confined to such visions, however; they extend to his political opinions:

> A bunch of sadists get sunstroke and declare themselves saviors. Then they begin to torture people and ride them like mules, especially after they discover that this is easier, and perhaps more pleasurable, than fulfilling their promises. Later another group will come along to depose the first, bringing with them longer whips and chains of a more economic metal.

The nightmare that American readers of this novel may be waking up to these days is that their country is now the one holding the whips and the chains. Despite its political overtones, however, *I'jaam* works on an aesthetic level as well.

For its experimental nature, its portrayal of ordinary human beings struggling with oppression and above all its attention to language, it will be remembered as one of the essential Arab novels of its time. ■

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DOVER, DELAWARE, *Nation* discussion group is forming. Contact Bruce Dudley if interested, (302) 697-6057.

BRADENTON/SARASOTA *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP meets monthly. For further information call (941) 761-4873.

LOS ANGELES, CA, BRENTWOOD AREA. *Nation* discussion group forming. E-mail: bernlandis@verizon.net.

JOIN THE ATLANTA *Nation* discussion group! Contact John McDonough, (770) 594-8097. jmcdono@bellsouth.net.

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

***NATION* STUDENT OUTREACH:** Attention student activists! If you're involved in organizing a progressive event, lecture or film festival on your campus or in your community and would like to distribute copies of *The Nation*, please let us know by calling (212) 209-5416.

VOLUNTEER to teach Spanish, English, computer skills, citizenship preparation or to help in other ways. Small, friendly nonprofit in Manhattan needs volunteers to work with adult immigrants and language learners. Evening hours. Spanish not required for English teachers. Contact Centro de Educación de Trabajadores: (212) 765-4634; centronyc.org.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

EXPERIENCED PSYCHOANALYST also working with couples and families. Approach is psychodynamic but also eclectic. San Francisco and Marin. CA-PSY11249. Kristine Pfleiderer, DMH. (415) 563-8207.

WOMAN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST. PhD, twenty-five years of experience. Insight-oriented and analytic. Free consultation. Sliding scale. Mutually agreed upon fees. Insurance accepted. Carnegie Hall vicinity. Margaret Kinder, (212) 582-5508.

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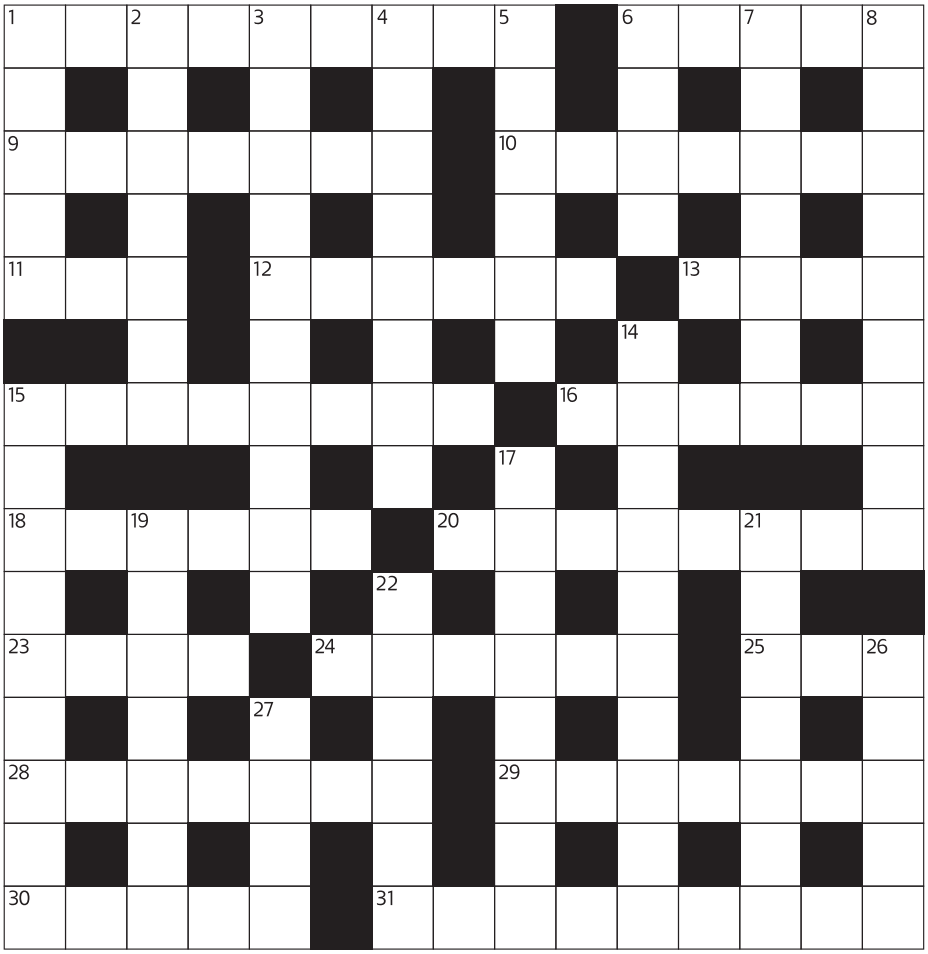
Puzzle No. 3111

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 A sentimental fool—one taken advantage of—a real bird! (9)

6 Optimists did it for the best in the shop, editors say. See? (5)

9 Depend on little notice with one inside it, easily at hand. (7)

10 A likely place to find a priest, alternatively a right-winger. (7)

11, 13 and **18** Erect, alternatively closed down with a challenging remark. (3,2,2,4,2)

12 One isn't likely to find such a perfect place. (6)

13 See 11

15 Badly cut around a point in pristine condition, which one hopes not to get on the drive. (8)

16 One hears it's a place that could be either North or South, but it's hard on the nervous system. (6)

18 See 11

20 Looks around a triumphal memorial—looks very hard! (8)

23 See 26 down

24 Reluctant to a point, but you hate to do it. (6)

25 A car is wrecked in the curve here. (3)

28 The pig gets around the barrier, but one is not supposed to make a spring. (7)

29 What one does regularly to the clock, alternatively—especially if one is a "royal." (7)

30 Moses begged them here to let certain people go. (5)

31 They renounce desire, having little sprouts around a number with this sort. (9)

DOWN

1 and **6** A common fight on a pile-up where you throw the junk… (5-4)

2 …in a vintage automobile that is a sort of 6 down, not up. (7)

3 Everywhere, making an often illegal turn with the coach when I quit with nothing going inside it. (10)

4 Not really a place to find the lockers—but rather the one that has "qwerty" to start. (8)

5 Not a seasoned soldier that is following an important piece on board. (6)

6 See 1 down

7 Not amateurs for each way to succeed. (7)

8 Builds castles in the air, which are certainly not nightmares! (9)

14 Supposedly unlucky if at the end of the workweek, describing one of a baker's dozen. (10)

15 What goes in the ground to hurry with the greatest possible speed. (9)

17 Given this is the finest thing, it still had debts to follow. (8)

19 Not prepared to be like Ethelred? (7)

21 Those in them are not quick to find she is wrong about the listeners. (7)

22 A Shakespearean character that might hang around dusty corners. (6)

26 and **23** across One doesn't like to play with such at the table, because they are really laughable people with angelic instruments. (10)

27 Guy associated with gunpower, treason and this, as the Brits say—but it might be something to grow on. (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3110

S	U	M	M	A	R	Y	■	T	I	C	K	L	E	D
W	■	E	■	M	■	A	■	I	■	O	■	U	■	E
A	M	A	T	E	U	R	■	R	O	M	A	N	I	A
G	■	D	■	N	■	D	■	A	■	M	■	A	■	D
M	O	O	N	S	■	A	N	D	■	A	N	T	E	S
A	■	W	■	■	■	R	■	E	■	■	■	I	■	E
N	O	S	T	R	U	M	■	S	O	L	I	C	I	T
■	■	■	■	A	■	■	■	■	■	I	■	■	■	■
O	F	T	E	N	E	R	■	S	T	E	A	L	T	H
F	■	O	■	■	■	U	■	N	■	■	■	U	■	E
F	A	D	E	S	■	S	K	I	■	T	I	M	E	R
I	■	E	■	A	■	T	■	P	■	R	■	B	■	S
C	H	A	N	C	E	L	■	P	L	U	M	A	G	E
E	■	T	■	K	■	E	■	E	■	C	■	G	■	L
S	C	H	I	S	M	S	■	T	A	K	E	O	F	F

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